

BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST ROMANCE!

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WHITE BEAVER'S Still Hunt;

OR, THE

MINER MARAUDER'S DEATH-TRACK.

The Magic Medicine Man's Mission.*
BY BUFFALO BILL, (COL. W. F. CODY.)

CHAPTER I.

THE RED RIVALS.

OVER hill and through valley, their horses panting with fatigue, two persons rode at a desperate pace to seek a goal of safety, it

* Doctor D. Frank Powell, the present Mayor of La Crosse, Wis., and a noted physician and surgeon.

WHITE BEAVER DREW REIN AND GAZED DOWN AT THE TRACKS BEFORE HIM.

would seem, for their faces were constantly turned behind them as though watching for pursuers.

One of the two could not but hope for pursuers, for that one was a young girl and she was bound, her feet beneath the horse she rode, her hands behind her.

The other was evidently her captor, and leading her horse he urged the horses on and on.

Both riders were Indians, the one a chief in full war-paint, the other a maiden of the tribe to which he also belonged.

Suddenly as they neared a heavily wooded ridge, at the base of which glided a clear stream, the maiden's lips parted with a cry of joy, for her eyes had fallen upon a horseman dashing into view back on their trail.

He, too, was an Indian chief, and riding like the wind in pursuit, though alone.

The fugitive chief saw him also and gave vent to a lowly uttered threat.

Reaching the stream the tired horses thrust their nostrils deep into the cool waters, and no lashing and urging could force them on.

Seeing that the pursuer was gaining, the fugitive chief suddenly sprung into the stream, freed the feet of the captive, lifted her in his arms and bore her across to the other side.

He looked ahead upon the trail, and appeared to realize that further flight was useless—that he must fight then and there for his prize—that, to keep her, he must kill his foe.

He then stood at bay, as the other came on, until, suddenly, another thought flashed through his mind, and whipping out his knife, he raised it over the Indian girl, whom he grasped about the waist, thus holding her at his mercy!

She uttered no cry, but calmly looked into his face.

A few moments more and the pursuing chief was near at hand, but seeing the threatening act of the other, came quickly to a halt.

"Let the War Eagle go back on his trail if he does not wish to see the Red Bird die!"

"If he comes on, the knife of the Killer will drink the Red Bird's blood."

The one who called himself the "Killer" spoke in the Sioux tongue, and his looks showed that he meant to carry out his threat.

The War Eagle came quickly to a halt, half raised his rifle, then leaped from his horse and stood undecided.

His enemy protected himself with the form of the Indian girl so that he could not fire upon him, but lowering his knife he snatched from his belt a revolver and in an instant sent several shots at his enemy, the Red Bird seeking to destroy his aim.

The snapping of the hammer showed that he had no more shots in the weapon, and once again he seized the girl and raised his knife, for the War Eagle was rushing upon him now, though with tottering feet, for one of the bullets had brought him to his knees, and a second one had also wounded him.

At the sight of the knife again raised over the heart of Red Bird, the War Eagle quickly halted.

But, clear and fearless the words came from the girl's lips:

"Let the great War Eagle come on and battle with his foe, for the Red Bird fears not to die."

At this the War Eagle advanced once more, though unsteadily, for it was very evident that he had been hard hit by the bullets.

Still he showed no fear for himself, only a desire to rescue the Indian maid from his rival.

But the Killer was determined to prove his right to his name, and his hand was nerved for the deadly blow of the knife into the Indian girl's bosom.

A glance miles back on the trail had shown him that a party of horsemen had come into view.

He knew that they were the band of his rival.

He would kill the girl, as escape with her was impossible, dispatch his foe, and then continue his flight on his horse, for the animal of War Eagle had proven himself better than his own animals he had picked

to run off with Red Bird and seek another tribe.

The young girl looked him straight in the eyes and began to chant her death-song, for she read there her fate.

The War Eagle was pressing on, but had the stream to cross and would arrive too late to save her.

As the knife began its descent there rung out a rifle-shot and the blade fell from the shattered hand of the Killer!

CHAPTER II.

THE PALE-FACE RESCUER.

THE knife in its fall from the shattered hand of the Indian chief, cut a gash in the cheek of the girl, who, released from the grasp of her intended slayer, sprung back from him with a startled cry at her escape.

The War Eagle had tottered upon the bank of the stream, and fallen, unable to go further.

And the Killer?

Surprised, enraged, and with his shattered hand stinging with intense pain, he turned to face his new foe.

The shot had come from the ridge, but the timber concealed the one who fired.

Fearing to meet a foe with his hand useless, no load in his revolver, his rifle and bow and arrows swinging to his saddle, the Killer determined to at least have his revenge, kill the girl, then his rival and take refuge in flight.

Seizing his knife in his left hand, he sprung toward Red Bird, who had not suspected his intention, and again would she have been at his mercy, when a second shot was heard, this time nearer than the other, and the Killer dropped dead in his tracks.

At the same instant, a tall, sinewy form bounded into view on the side of the hill, and came dashing down to the spot.

Red Bird stood as though about to dart away, for her hands were still bound behind her back, and she glanced anxiously toward the War Eagle, who lay still and dead, or unconscious.

"Do not fear me, for I am not one to harm you," cried the one who came toward her, speaking in the Sioux tongue, and speaking it fairly well.

The Red Bird looked at him and beheld a very striking personage, tall, splendidly formed, clad in the fatigue uniform of a cavalry officer of the captain's rank, and wearing the insignia of a surgeon upon his shoulder-straps.

His face was a handsome one, but stern, determined and fearless, and his eyes were dark, penetrating and most expressive.

He wore top-boots with spurs, a slouch hat with gold cord, crossed saber, a belt in which were a pair of revolvers and carried in his hands a repeating rifle.

"The pale-face is the foe of my people, but he has saved the Red Bird from death," said the Indian girl, gazing intently at him.

"And glad am I to save the Red Bird from death; but that mad chief wounded you after all, I see, and has killed the one who sought to rescue you from him."

"No, no, the War Eagle is not dead, for see, he moves!" cried the girl.

"You are right; he is not dead."

"So that is the great young chief, War Eagle, is it? and you are the Red Bird, the daughter of the great medicine-chief, Death Fighter?"

"I have heard of you all, and I will see if I can do anything for the War Eagle. Fortunately I have my case of instruments and medicines with me, for I am a medicine-man of the pale-faces, as the Red Bird's father is of his people."

Giving a shrill whistle, the surgeon waited a moment, and down the hill trail came two horses, one saddled, the other a pack-animal.

They trotted up to him, and leaping into his saddle, he threw his arm about Red Bird, whose hands he had already freed of the bonds, and rode across the stream, the pack-horse following.

Springing to the ground, he stepped quickly to where the War Eagle lay, placed him upon his back and began to examine his wounds, Red Bird looking on with anxious face.

"Two wounds, one in the neck, the other in the side; both serious, but not fatal, I believe," he muttered.

From his pack-saddle he took his case of surgical instruments and medicine case, got Red Bird to fill his canteen at the stream, and was soon hard at work with his patient.

The young Indian chief winced under the probe, opened his eyes and saw the white face of a foe bending over him; but he saw Red Bird, too, and heard her words:

"It is the brave pale-face chief who killed the Killer and saved the Red Bird."

"He is the medicine-man of the pale-faces, and will save the War Eagle."

The young chief's eyes were again bent on the surgeon's face, and he said in a whisper almost:

"My young braves will soon be here."

"Let the Red Bird protect the great pale-face medicine-man."

"The Red Bird hears," was the answer of the girl, and she glanced down the trail, where she could see all of a mile, and then watched the movements of the surgeon.

She saw him take out the bullet from the chief's neck, and soon after extract the one buried in his side, and he handed them both to her.

Then the wounds were most carefully dressed, a soothing draught given to the suffering chief, and he was turning to attend to the gash on her cheek when she sprung to her feet and glided swiftly away.

He saw the cause for her sudden act, for not three hundred yards away came a band of half a hundred mounted warriors, riding hard, having come by another trail than the one the Red Bird had been looking for them on.

"Well, I am in for it now to live or die," coolly muttered the surgeon as he stepped to the side of his horse.

CHAPTER III.

THE GIRL SOLDIER OF THE SIOUX.

THE officer saw the Indian horsemen halt at the command of Red Bird, who stood in their trail and held up her hand to check them.

What she said to them he could not of course hear, but she was talking earnestly, and pointed toward him, and he felt that she was making known the rescue of her from death and the care he had shown the wounded chief.

The surgeon was a man of iron nerve, and he showed no anxiety, no dread as to what the result would be.

If they did not heed the words of the young Indian girl and come on as foes, he would meet them as such, selling his life dearly.

If they came as friends he would offer the hand of peace to them.

Whatever their intention he would meet them half-way.

He saw them dismount, stake their horses out and then follow the Red Bird to the spot where he stood by their wounded chief, whose splendid horse had distanced them in the pursuit of the kidnapper, Killer.

They advanced with their hands raised, all of them, presenting a strange appearance, the palms being extended toward the surgeon in sign of peace, to show that they held no weapons in them.

One of the band was a sub-chief, and he walked by the side of Red Bird, who came straight up to the surgeon and taking his hand said:

"The braves of my people wish to be the red brothers of the great pale-face medicine-man, for the Red Bird has told them that he saved her from the bad chief Killer, while he has been good to the young chief War Eagle."

"The chief Poison Arrow will speak for his braves."

The sub-chief at this made a speech in which he told over the story, as he had heard it from Red Bird, and then added:

"The great white medicine-man has a good heart. he has been the foe of my people, they have sought his scalp on many trails, but now he is their pale-face brother, they love him."

With this he offered his hand, which the surgeon grasped warmly, and then passed along the line of braves, shaking hands with each, and muttering to himself:

"I have made myself solid with this outfit, that is certain."

Then he stepped up to the young girl,

examined the wound upon her cheek, bathed it carefully and drew it together with several stitches, the Red Bird not flinching under the needle.

In perfect silence the braves stood and watched him, and stoical as they were, there was a look of admiration in their glance for the pale-face surgeon.

"The Red Bird is brave, she is a Little Girl Soldier, for she bears a wound a warrior might be proud of, and faced death unflinchingly," said the surgeon with a smile, and suddenly the low, but firmly-uttered words fell upon their ears:

"The white chief has named the Red Bird over again, for she shall be known as the Little Girl Soldier of the Sioux."

The speaker was the War Eagle.

Believed to be asleep, or unconscious, he had heard all, seen all, and his braves, at his words, quickly surrounded him and showed their delight at seeing that he was not fatally wounded as they had feared.

They had been happy in the rescue of Red Bird, but their joy was dimmed by the condition in which they had found their chief.

Approaching the War Eagle, the braves falling aside respectfully to allow him to do so, the surgeon placed his hand upon his pulse and said:

"The War Eagle is badly wounded, but needs rest and care and will be himself again."

"Let his young braves bear him back to his village, and his white brother will go with him and make him well."

The face of the young chief brightened at this, for he seemed to feel that he was beyond the skill of his own medicine-men, even of the great medicine-chief Death Fighter.

He had known how skillfully the surgeon had extracted the bullets and dressed his wounds, had seen him sew up the gash in Red Bird's cheek and felt that he could save his life, and so he was glad to hear that he would go with him to his village.

"The white chief will be welcome among my people."

"He has killed the Cheyenne chief, Killer, who came to our village years ago and we called him brother."

"He wished to steal the Red Bird from her father, the great medicine-chief, Death Fighter, and from the War Eagle who loves her, and he would have taken her life but for my pale-face brother here."

"Let him take the scalp of the Killer and wear it at his belt, and my people will call him brother."

The surgeon hesitated a moment, then leaped into his saddle, rode across the stream, and, scalping the dead renegade chief, returned with the ghastly trophy and war-bonnet, and said:

"Let the Little Girl Soldier of the Sioux have them."

The looks of the girl and all showed that he could not have bestowed upon her a more graceful compliment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SURGEON SCOUT.

AMONG the officers of Fort M— no one was more popular than was D. Frank Powell, surgeon of the post.

There was that about him that won officers and men alike to him, and with the fair sex he was a universal favorite.

Few knew much of his past history, save that some shadow had fallen upon his life in earlier years which had driven him to the frontier, where, after serving as a scout, guide and miner, he received an appointment as surgeon in the United States Army, for he had graduated at the head of his class in medicine and surgery, yet had given up practice in the confines of civilization, amid comforts and pleasant surroundings, to enter upon a wild mining life upon the border.

Appointed to the —th cavalry, he soon became known as a man most skilled in his profession, while he quickly won the name of a scout and Indian-fighter, and was also a dashing and fearless officer, ever found in the front in action.

Being named by the regiment the Surgeon Scout, he seemed to like the appellation, and time and again had rendered most valuable services to the command as scout and guide.

Ordered to Fort M—, he became post surgeon, and continued to gain popularity there as before in the field.

A man of splendid physique, handsome face, courteous manners, refined, well educated, and with a way about him very fascinating, one could hardly believe that when his anger was justly aroused he could become a perfect tiger and would risk any danger to hunt down a foe who had wronged him.

That his life had been clouded by some great grief all felt assured, and yet, as he never spoke of the past, no one, not even a woman, had the temerity to ask him of his bygone career.

When, therefore, it was whispered about the fort that Surgeon Powell had received some news by the Overland mail that had caused him to mutter to himself something about resigning his commission, all were exceedingly sorry and hoped that it could not be so.

They saw him go to his quarters, lock himself in and there remain for several hours, until nightfall, when, in full uniform, he was seen going to the quarters of Colonel Merrill, the commandant of the post.

The colonel received him pleasantly, bade him be seated, and said in a kindly way:

"Some one told me, Powell, that they feared you got bad news by the Overland mail to-day?"

"I received news, Colonel Merrill, which I regret to say will cause me to resign from the army, sir."

"Not so bad as that, I sincerely hope, doctor?"

"Yes, sir, it must be."

"If you wish an extended leave, you know I can arrange it for you, but we can't give you up altogether."

"I thank you, sir, for your kind words; but a leave would not do, for I must resign my commission, and have come to tender it to you now, sir."

"I am indeed sorry to hear this, and can it not be arranged in some other way?"

"No, sir, in no other way save by my resignation, for I have a mission to perform that must be at once entered upon."

"What that mission is, Colonel Merrill, I cannot make known, sir, but it is a demand upon me, a duty, and must be accomplished, and I do not care to go upon it holding a commission as an officer of the army, and hence, sir, you will confer a favor upon me by immediately accepting my resignation."

"At present, sir, the Indians are not on the war-path, so it is not like resigning in the face of a foe."

"No man would dare hint such a thing of you to me, Powell, in fact, the trouble has been to keep you from constantly facing your foes."

"I do not wish to pry into your affairs, so will ask you nothing about your reasons for resigning, and, as far as I am concerned, will accept your resignation and send it on with an indorsement of sincere regret at its necessity."

"Thank you, Colonel Merrill," said the Surgeon Scout with feeling.

"I only wish it was possible for you to withhold your resignation for awhile, and see if you cannot get along without leaving the service."

"I cannot, sir, for it is impossible."

"I must resign," was the firm response.

The colonel then accepted the resignation and asked:

"But when do you leave us, Powell?"

"At dawn, sir."

"So soon?"

"I will order an escort for you to where you wish to go, as no coach leaves for a week you know."

"Thank you, colonel, but I do not care for an escort, as I prefer to go alone, and my destination is the mining country."

"I shall depart at dawn, sir, and I beg to thank you for your great kindness to me in very many ways."

"I have enjoyed life here, and shall often recall my army life with regret that it had to come to an end."

Bidding the colonel farewell the Surgeon Scout returned to his quarters where, until late in the night he was receiving calls from his many friends.

As he rode out of the fort at dawn officers and men had risen to give him a parting

cheer, and they saw him disappear over the prairie, his pack-horse following him, with deep sorrow in having lost from their midst the dashing, gallant Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER V.

IN SEARCH OF INFORMATION.

THE Bed Rock Mining-camps were on the boom, for gold was being found in paying quantities, saloons were crowded, gambling-dens prosperous, the stores were making money, and noise, confusion, excitement, work and brawls were the order of the day and night.

There were half a thousand men gathered in and around Bed Rock City, and there were a score of nationalities represented in those who had gone there in search of gold, be it by fair or foul means that they got it.

They were a hard lot most of them, many of them bearing the brand of Cain upon their hands, and showing by their lawless lives that they were willing to be branded again and again, for to have "killed his man," was the acme of heroism to some of the toughs, and one who could count half a dozen fatal encounters in which he had come out safe was a hero of heroes, at least in his own eyes.

If Bed Rock City went a couple of days without a deadly shooting scrape, a knife encounter, things looked dull, and the tenderfeet got too impudent, the old-timers were wont to say, so must be kept down by examples of what they might expect if they did not yield gracefully to all those who wished to run the community in their own way.

It was into Bed Rock City that the Surgeon Scout rode several days after leaving the fort.

He had been eyed curiously as he went along the main trail, called by courtesy an avenue, his pack-animal trotting close upon the heels of the horse he rode, and both of them being splendid animals.

The surgeon was dressed in his fatigue uniform, save his shoulder-straps, and the gilt cord and crossed sabers upon his hat, for he had no citizen's apparel to put on.

He rode up to the shanty which was called the Gilt Edge Inn, dismounted and first looked to the care of his horses, although the tough-looking landlord who greeted him, told him that they would be well cared for.

The Surgeon Scout had heard such legends before, and took promises for what they were worth—nothing.

"I can get a place to spread my blankets here to-night, landlord, and something to eat?" he said.

"You bet you kin, as good a bed as a man would want, and the best grub the camp affords."

The bed was a bunk against the wall, with a grass mattress in it, and no sheets, pillow or covering, but then every man carried his own bedding, so that was a slight matter.

The "best grub" was bacon, bread and coffee, but the Surgeon Scout ate with the appetite of a man who had roughed it and took things as they came.

Then he asked the landlord if he could tell him whether a man by the name of David Dunston was in the mines there.

"I knows him well, a tall, fine-looking chap, and a gent from 'wayback."

"He came here some months or more ago, along with several pards, and began mining down on Cherry Creek, but they don't come into Bed Rock often, so I seldom sees them."

"How far is their camp from here, landlord?"

"Don't know, but only a few miles."

"You must have passed it coming up Cherry Creek Trail, as you came that way; but I'll tell you who kin give yer full particulars about Dunston and his pards."

"Who is that?"

"Buck Bolton, ther Card-Sharp o' Bed Rock."

"Who is he?"

"Don't know Buck?"

"I confess that I do not, though now I think of it, I have heard of a gambler by that name who is a merciless wretch, and boasts of his having killed and ruined more tenderfeet than any other man on the border."

"Sh! Pard, go slow in what you say of Buck Bolton, for he is a bad one, and a killer from Killville, and there are those always ready to run and tell him what they hears about him, jist to curry favor with him."

"I never choose my language in speaking of a villain, such as I have heard that man is."

"Waal, he's not a saint, that's a fact; but folks is afeared of him, as he has got nigh onto a dozen graves upon ther hill which he supplied with human fruit, and he's quicker than greased lightnin' on ther shoot, and uses a knife equally as well as a revolver."

"So robs a man at cards, and kills him if he objects to it, eh?"

"That is about the size of it, sir," whispered the landlord.

"And he can tell me where to find David Dunston?"

"He can, for they is pards."

"And where can I find this man Bolton the card-sharp?"

"He goes the rounds of the saloons every night, gambling awhile in each, and he begins at my lay-out of the Gilt Edge next door, and it's about time he showed up," and the landlord looked at his watch.

"All right, I will drop in and see if he is there."

"I'll go with you, pard, for it strikes me that you and Buck can't get along together jist like turtle-doves, and I wants ter be thar; but remember, I has warned you what Buck is, and I happen to have heerd o' you too, and you hain't no slouch, them tells me as knows yer best."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CARD-SHARP OF BED ROCK CITY.

WITH the compliment to Surgeon Powell, that he had heard of him, and those who knew him best said that he was "no slouch," the landlord accompanied his guest to the Gilt Edge Saloon.

Where the gilt edge came in was not visible with a microscope, for all that glittered there was the gold piled up before the gamblers.

It was a rough-looking place, within and without, but the latter was preferable to a wise man.

Within was a space of some sixty by thirty feet, with boarded sides, low roof, through which there were openings for ventilation, as it would never have done to have had windows, through which a man on the outside could fire upon a foe within.

There was but one door, and that swung open on the outside.

Oil lamps were ranged in a row from the peak of the roof, swung down by wires, and these gave light enough for the purpose, which was to see one's cards.

Then, too, much light was not needed to drink by, and if an encounter took place too much light was not needed.

With tobacco smoke filling the room, where sat half a hundred men, the fumes of "tanglefoot" liquids, and the hum of voices mostly engaged in uttering oaths, the place was not an inviting one by any means.

Rude tables and benches, a rough bar, a faro table and a few other games comprised the furniture in the place, and the bartenders were kept busy dispensing drinks, the card-players generally ordering a bottle of whisky and glasses at a time, so as to drink at will during their games.

The men there at a glance looked like bandits, though, as one picked out the wheat from the chaff, for the latter was most numerous, it was seen that appearances were deceiving, for now and then good, honest miners were to be seen in the saloon, their wild life having rendered them rather *outré* in looks.

There were men there who had once been rich, college graduates, men of mind and one time position among their fellows, men who had traveled the world over, and yet whom poverty had put upon a common level with the most of their race.

Surgeon Frank Powell had taken in the situation at a glance.

There was nothing new to him in that wild frontier camp, and he looked coolly over the crowd, and asked the landlord quietly:

"Where is the card-sharp?"

"He is not here yet, sir; but he'll be along soon."

"Will you have suthin' ter drink with me?"

"No, thank you?"

"Maybe you'll play a game while waiting?"

The Surgeon Scout hesitated, then said:

"While waiting I do not mind risking a few gold pieces at faro."

With this he went up to the faro-table, selected his card and placed upon it a twenty-dollar gold piece.

Almost instantly he won, and the winnings in gold were raked over to him.

He placed two twenties in gold upon the same card and again won.

The third play it was three twenties, and with the same result.

The fourth play he changed his card, putting down four twenties, and again he won, while those who had begun to follow his lead, and bet on the card he deserted, lost.

A fifth and sixth time he won, and so it continued, no matter what card he played.

The dealer looked nervous, and the landlord began to feel sorry he had asked him to play, so said:

"There comes the man you wish to see, sir."

The landlord was only too glad to see Buck Bolton come in, for the Surgeon Scout's luck was beginning to tell on the bank, and he had a large sum in gold coin piled up before him.

But, though Buck Bolton had entered the saloon, Surgeon Powell did not look around at once, placing two more bets before doing so, and each time adding another twenty dollar gold piece.

"I've been lucky, landlord, so treat the gentlemen all to drinks and cigars at my expense," he said quietly, turning down on the table a hundred dollars and pocketing his other winnings, and which weighted down his pockets heavily.

Then he turned to see Buck Bolton, the card-sharp, and saw him standing near, and watching him closely.

The card-sharp had already been told of the great luck of the stranger, and had made his way to a position near him, and the gaze he turned upon him was one of insolent curiosity.

Buck Bolton was a tall man of slender build, but with sinewy and athletic form.

He was the only man in Bed Rock who dared to wear a white shirt and good clothes; but this he did, dressing flashily, wearing a diamond in his cravat, and its match upon his left little finger, while his boots were polished and he was the picture of a frontier dandy.

Underneath his short velvet coat all who knew him were aware that he carried two bowie knives and a pair of revolvers just where he could drop his hands upon them in an instant.

"You are a stranger to me, sir, but I have been told that you came to Bed Rock to see me," he said quietly, addressing Doctor Powell.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GAMBLER'S CHALLENGE.

SURGEON FRANK POWELL had measured the card-sharp at a glance.

The name of Buck Bolton was well known to him, for his deeds had been talked over around the camp-fires, and he was regarded as a very dangerous man.

A year before in another mining camp than Bed Rock City, he had wounded an army officer in a personal encounter that followed a charge that he was a sharper, and on one occasion had killed a sergeant sent to arrest him.

His red deeds were well known, and he was said to have won a large fortune in gambling, though he claimed to be a miner and had men in his employ working several leads for him.

The doctor took his measure completely, and set him down as a handsome, bold, merciless, lawless man who stopped at nothing to gain his ends.

The officer whom he had wounded had been Surgeon Powell's particular friend, and on account of the injury he had been forced to be retired, thus blasting his hopes of making name and rank for himself.

The face of Buck Bolton was cruel, cynical and merciless.

He had no friendships and pursued a foe remorselessly.

He gave liberally to unfortunates whom he came in contact with, but not from generosity, but to make them willing to serve him when he needed them.

In answer to his words, which were spoken as though he deemed that the surgeon had come to Bed Rock City to seek trouble with him, and nothing could please him more, Doctor Powell said in his pleasant way:

"You are mistaken, sir, I did not come to Bed Rock City to meet you."

"Ah! some one has lied to me then, and I must hold him for it."

"Oh, no, do not do that, for the mistake was a natural one, for, not finding the one I came here to seek, I was told that you could tell me of him."

The interest in the gambling games had ceased, and all looked upon the two men now facing each other some fifteen feet apart.

The crowd knew Buck Bolton and were aware that he never missed an opportunity to get into trouble.

They saw an army officer there, and supposed he had come on account of Bolton's trouble with the lieutenant a year before.

A few present knew who the Surgeon Scout really was, and one man whispered in exultant tone:

"This time Buck has met his match, so he'd better go slow."

"Who did you wish to see?" asked Bolton calmly, but with an evil glitter in his eyes.

"One, David Dunston?"

"A friend of yours?"

"No, he is my foe, as I am his," was the low, stern response of the Surgeon Scout.

"He's a friend of mine," was the gambler's response.

"I do not doubt that, for he was not choice in his friendships."

Matters were growing more and more interesting, and the crowd was breathless and silent, the landlord gradually moving away from the side of the Surgeon Scout, as though to get out of range.

"He is my friend, and so are those with him."

"May I ask who they are?"

"Merton Valour, Dabney Turpin and Paul Paxton," known here, with Dunston, as the Miner Gentlemen."

A strange look passed over the face of Surgeon Powell as he answered:

"I know Dunston, Valour and Turpin, but not Paxton."

"They are three men I am most anxious to meet, but I did not anticipate finding the trio together, and I am glad that I am able to do so."

"You speak as though you had a grudge to square with them?"

"I have, to be frank with you."

"Well, you'll not find them here in Bed Rock."

"Ah! have they all three gone?"

"All four of the Miner Gentlemen, for Paul Paxton went with them."

"I did know that Dunston would not care to meet me, but thought, backed by the others, he might do so."

"Are you sure that they have gone?"

"I am."

"When did they go, and where?"

"They have left the mines for good, at least said so, and where they have gone I do not know."

"They had interests here I am told?"

"They had, but they sold out to me."

"To you?"

"Yes, I bought their mining interests here, paying them in solid cash just what they asked."

The surgeon looked annoyed, and there was an expression in his eyes as though he doubted the gambler, and he said:

"I suppose you should know, sir; but it is a strange circumstance that they should have gone just as I arrived here in the mines."

"Well, gone they have, but as you seem to be so disappointed at not finding Dunston and his pards, let me say to you flat-footed, that I bought out all their claims here, and if you have got anything to settle, payable in gold, lead or steel, I am your

man, for I answer for them whenever you choose to call my hand and show your own," and the challenge neither Doctor Powell or any one else who heard it could fail to understand.

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE NUGGET.

A SILENCE that could be felt followed the words of Gambler Bolton.

From the first he had seemed anxious for a quarrel with Doctor Powell, and now there was no mistaking his words, when he placed himself as the champion of those the Surgeon Scout sought, having first gotten from him an assertion that the men he had come to find were his foes.

All present gazed at the Surgeon Scout, when the words of the gambler were flung in his teeth as a challenge.

"Pardon me, but let me fully understand your words?" said the Surgeon Scout, without the tremor of a muscle, and his words were uttered in the calmest manner possible, as though he had really not taken the gambler's defiance as it was meant.

"I seldom repeat, but to oblige you will repeat what I said."

"Thank you, for I wish to be sure that I heard aright."

"I said that I had bought out Dunston and his pards, their quarrels and—"

"Hands up, or I'll kill you!"

The gambler, quick as he was, found one who was quicker on the draw and level.

He had intended to finish his sentence by drawing his own weapon, but the Surgeon Scout had anticipated him by several seconds.

He had him covered, the revolver bearing directly upon the gambler's brain, his eyes looking into the muzzle.

The weapon was cocked, the finger on the trigger, and the hand holding it was as firm as a rock.

Every eye was turned upon Buck Bolton.

His face slightly changed color, but he saw that he was outgeneraled, and he knew that a movement to draw a revolver would cause his death.

He was no fool to throw his life away, though he was wont to take big chances with death every day.

But the man who now faced him was one not to trifle with he knew, for he read it in every feature.

So he smiled pleasantly and remarked:

"You are unchained lightning on a draw, pard, and as you hold a steady hand and have a keen eye, I know when to obey a command, so up go my card-shufflers."

With the words he raised his hands over his head.

"You are wise."

"I have no quarrel with you, but you seemed anxious to force one upon me, so if it is quits now, I have no more to say."

"It is never quits with me, pard, with one whom I owe a grudge to until I have been avenged."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that I shall force you to fight me square."

"You do not intend to drop the matter here, then?"

The gambler seemed to know his man, to feel that he was not one to take an unfair advantage, or to kill him as he would, were their places reversed, and said:

"No, I do not intend to drop the matter here, either for Dunston or myself."

"What is your will?"

"To fight you," and Gambler Bolton knew that it was his only salvation, to force a fight with the Surgeon Scout.

For once in his life he had been brought to book, and he must redeem himself before the community or lose his grip.

"If you demand a meeting, I cannot refuse."

"As the challenged party, I shall select revolvers, the distance across this room, and—"

"March on each other, firing as we advance."

"There will be no need of that, for, as far as I am concerned, one shot will settle it."

A murmur of applause went around at this, and the gambler did not like it, but said:

"All right, I am ready, so choose your seconds."

"Please, sir, may I act as your second?"

The voice was low, almost childish, and turning, Frank Powell beheld a slender form by his side, and a boyish face was raised to his.

It was a bronzed face, not overly clean, and a shock of red hair covered the head.

The youth was hardly over eighteen, his slight form was clad in baggy pants, stuck in boots too large for his feet, and he wore a blue shirt and corduroy sack-coat, while a slouch hat dropped over his face and about his neck.

In the mines he was known as Little Nugget, and it was said that he had found many a nugget of gold and had it hidden away.

Once, with no reason, Gambler Buck Bolton had struck him a severe blow in the face, and the boy seemed to have literally hated him from that moment.

"Why, my boy, do you wish to be a second in a fatal duel?" asked the Surgeon Scout, gazing with interest upon the youth.

"I do, sir, for I hate that man, and if you kill him you will avenge me, while, if he kills you, I will avenge you!" was the low response, but fiercely uttered.

"What is your name, my young friend?"

"Little Nugget, sir."

"All right as I have no friends here, so you shall act for me," and the Surgeon Scout held out his hand which Little Nugget grasped warmly.

CHAPTER IX.

A SURPRISE FOR THE MINERS.

THE look that Little Nugget gave the Surgeon Scout was a strange one, when he said that he could be his second.

"You understand the rules, I suppose, of border dueling, having lived in the mines."

"Oh, yes, sir, and am a dead shot myself."

"You bet he is, for he's a dandy."

"Yer has a good one in him, Doc, if he is a boy," said the landlord, coming forward, and glad not to be called upon to have to serve the Surgeon Scout, and thus place himself in opposition to Buck Bolton.

As a duel had been decided upon, the miners quickly halved themselves into the two ends of the saloon, leaving the space in the center clear.

A burly looking fellow, with desperado written all over his face, was called upon by the gambler to act for him, and he laughed rudely when referred by the Surgeon Scout to Little Nugget.

"Say, yer hain't in earnest, be yer, ter call a cradle kid inter ther game?" he said.

"If I have to take hold of you, my man, you'll find that I am in earnest, for I'll allow no insult to be cast upon my second."

"Oho! that's ther way yer talk is it?"

"Waal, I kin put up with it from a dying man, for you is sure dead the moment yer fronts Pard Buck Bolton."

"We shall see," was the calm reply, and turning to the youth Doctor Powell continued:

"Now, Little Nugget, see to arranging the preliminaries, and if that fellow insults you again, he has me to deal with."

There was something in the looks of the Surgeon Scout that awed the desperado, who was known as Demon Dick, on account of his remorseless nature and wild orgies when under the influence of liquor.

He made no reply to Frank Powell's remark to Little Nugget, but stepped up to him and the two talked together in a low tone for a moment.

Then the youth said:

"It is arranged, sir, that you stand across this room apart, with your backs toward each other, and wheel at the word and fire, and firing at will after the first shot."

"Very well, Little Nugget, I am satisfied with the arrangement and am ready, for my weapons I always keep in perfect condition."

"As I do mine, and I too am ready," answered Buck Bolton and there was an ugly look in his eyes that meant kill.

The two then took their positions facing each other, and Little Nugget and Demon Dick tossed up a gold piece for the word.

The boy won, and his face brightened at his luck.

Then the two, the Surgeon Scout and the gambler, turned their backs upon each other, and stood with their hands hanging down by their sides.

The words of command were.

"Right about, wheel!"

At the word to wheel the men were to draw their weapons, turn and fire, and the quickest in movement would get the first shot.

The boy miner stood near the center of the room with Demon Dick by his side, and his clear voice rung out with startling distinctness as he gave the words to usher in the fatal encounter.

With remarkable quickness both men drew, wheeled, and but one fired, for Frank Powell pulled trigger ahead of his adversary, the bullet from his revolver shattering the gambler's hand.

"I am satisfied, for I did not wish to take your life," said the Surgeon Scout, but there came at once the warning cry from Little Nugget:

"Look out, for God's sake!"

But Frank Powell had also seen the act of treachery in the gambler, that, with his right hand shattered, and life spared, with his left he had snatched out another revolver from his belt and was leveling it at his generous foe.

Unmoved by this second danger Frank Powell had also leveled his weapon and the two flashed together, his just an atom of time before the gambler's.

But it was enough, for his bullet was buried in the forehead of Buck Bolton, whose ball stuck in the wall close by the left side of the Surgeon Scout.

Seeing his comrade fall dead, Demon Dick quickly turned on his heel and left the saloon, just as Little Nugget dropped down on his knees by the motionless form of the gambler and gazing into his face said in a low, earnest voice:

"At last, Buckner Bolton, I am avenged."

"You are dead now, and no longer can I hate you."

"Oh, sir, you have avenged me in killing this man, for he has most cruelly wronged me in the past, and when my brother sought to right my wrongs, he killed him, and thus his hand sent my mother to her grave from a broken heart."

"I vowed to track him to the end, and I have seen him die, and now I am free, for I was Buckner Bolton's wife."

CHAPTER X.

THE GIRL MINER'S STORY.

IT was a double surprise to the men of Bed Rock City, to see the man whom they believed bore a charmed life, at last fall dead under the fire of one whom he had forced into an encounter with him, and also to discover that Little Nugget was not a boy, but a woman.

There was no denying either fact, for there was the dead form of the gambler upon the floor of the saloon, and there stood Little Nugget who had confessed her secret to all.

The miners had all expected, with perhaps a very few exceptions who knew something of the Surgeon Scout's life, to see Buck Bolton kill the stranger.

When his life had been spared, they all saw his act of treachery, and feared that he would yet accomplish his purpose.

But Frank Powell had been too quick even for his treachery.

There was a general sigh of relief when they saw the gambler dead, but now the confession of Little Nugget created the greater interest, and every eye was upon her.

She arose from her kneeling posture by the dead gambler, and seeming to feel that it was expected that she should say more, she turned with white face and brimming eyes, and said:

"Pards, I have but told the truth, for I am no boy, but a girl, nay a woman, for I am twenty-three years of age."

"That man won my love when I was but a girl of sixteen, and believing him all that was noble, I eloped with him, for my mother and brother did not wish me to marry him."

"It was a few months after that I came face to face with his wife, for he had deceived me into a marriage with him."

"In her anger at his desertion of her two

years before, and robbing her also of her little fortune, she had him arrested.

"But he escaped from prison, and my brother, who sought to capture him and punish him for his wrong toward me, was killed by him.

"Soon after my poor mother died of a broken heart, and left alone in the world, I vowed to be avenged, and so followed him to the West, where he had told me he had spent several years in the mines.

"It was a year ago that, disguised as a boy, I tracked him here, and I was biding my time, for I had written to his wife that I had found him and to send officers here after him.

"The answer came that she was dead, and leaving no fortune her lawyer would take no steps to capture him.

"When he struck me, and you all remember it, he said that which you did not hear:

"Come, you, boy, get out of my sight, for you remind me of one I hope is in her grave."

"To-night, you, sir, have avenged me, and I thank you, for you avenged my poor slain brother and my mother too."

Her voice choked up as she spoke, but turning to the landlord she asked him to see that the body was prepared, adding:

"I will pay all expenses, landlord, and attend the funeral.

"You will find me at Gambler Buck Bolton's cabin, now mine."

"Waal, yer better git thar soon, if yer wants ter save yer belongin's miss, for I seen Demon Dick go that way and thet means he, seein' Buck Bolton is dead, will rob ther lay-out o' all in it of value," said a miner.

"We'll go with you, Little Nugget," came in a chorus of voices, and half a hundred men started for the gambler's cabin, the best in the camps, and half a mile distant from the Gilt Edge Saloon.

The report of the miner was true, for Demon Dick had decided to help himself from the cabin of the gambler, but had gone first to his own quarters to get his horse and a pack-animal and then light out from the camps with what plunder he could secure.

The delay in going to his own cabin gave him just time to reach Buck Bolton's house, when, as he was preparing to search the place, he heard the voices of the miners, and knew that he was suspected and they were on his track.

To be caught meant lynching, and he fled with all haste, followed by a number of shots from those who caught sight of him leave the cabin, mount his horse and leading his pack-animal dash away down the trail in the darkness.

Little Nugget was at once installed in the house which no one disputed her possession of, and the miners left her there, while they returned to the Gilt Edge to talk over the night's occurrences, and to see the Surgeon Scout who had become a hero in their eyes.

But in the latter intention they were disappointed, for the landlord said that the Surgeon Scout had gone to the hotel and retired, and they would have to await until the morning to see him.

CHAPTER XI.

STARTING ON THE TRAIL.

WHETHER Frank Powell preferred to camp on the trail, and enjoy cooking his own breakfast to eating at the Bed Rock hotel, he certainly took his departure before any one was astir the following morning.

He had found out from the landlord that the Gentlemen Miners, as David Dunston's party was called, had been in the mines for some time.

Dunston had come first, then Valour and Turpin, and later they had been joined by Paul Paxton.

The landlord had seen a miner who knew that they had sold out the claim to Gambler Buck Bolton, but only that very evening, and he had heard Dunston say that they were compelled to at once leave the mines for other parts, and had been a witness when the gambler had paid them the gold for all interest in their claim.

Then they had mounted their horses, got supplies at the store, and with a couple of pack-horses well laden, had ridden away at night.

This was proof enough for Frank Powell that those he sought had gone, and he decided to make an early start the next morning, and he did so.

He, however, was anxious to go by the camp of the four men and have a look at it, and also to start from there upon the trail they had taken, for single-handed though he was, he meant to follow them.

In going to the camp, directed by a miner who was an early riser, he passed the cabin of the gambler who had fallen by his hand the night before.

Smoke was curling up from the chimney, and he saw the door open and the form of Little Nugget come out.

The recognition was mutual, and the woman waved her hand and called to him:

"Come by, please, for I was going to the hotel to see you, as soon as I had had breakfast."

"Is this your home?" asked Doctor Powell, as he halted before the cabin.

"It is now; but my old home is down the valley."

"I shall however move up here, for of course, as Bolton's wife, what he left behind belongs to me, and he was very rich I believe, and after all I have suffered I am entitled to his fortune, I think."

"He is interested in mines here, and I shall settle up his affairs and then go East, for I hate this country."

"And yet you have dwelt here, believed by all to like the life."

"I was playing a part."

"I have worked hard in the hunt for gold, and do you know I have had great luck, for I have gotten hidden away all of twenty thousand dollars, so, even without Bolton's fortune I would not suffer."

"And you remained here last night all alone?"

"Oh, yes, for I have gotten used to haunting memories, and I had to protect my inheritance, for do you know that fellow Demon Dick, came here to rob the cabin and then skip."

"You were in time to prevent him, though?"

"Yes, but not in time to hang him, and I was sorry, for the miners would have strung him up."

"Had you any hatred for him too?"

"Oh no, only he was Bolton's friend and tool, and I wanted him hanged, as I feared he might ambush and kill you."

"I think not, but I thank you for the warning, for I had not thought of him."

"Look out for him, for he does not belie his name; but will you halt and breakfast with me?"

"No, thank you, I'll breakfast later on the trail; but will you point out the camp of the Gentlemen Miners to me?"

"It is yonder under the cliff; but are you going there?"

"Only to strike their trail."

"Do you mean to follow those men?"

"Yes."

"Four of them?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes, I am going through life alone now."

"Take care that you do not go to your death."

"I shall keep a bright look-out for that; but I hope that you will carry out your intention to leave here, for this mining-camp is no place for you."

"No one knows that better than I do."

"When you can get your traps and gold together, get an escort and go to Fort M——, and Colonel Merrill will see that you get through in safety."

"Here, I will give you my card, and a line to him."

The doctor took out a card and pencil, wrote a few lines and handed it to the woman, who had washed the stain off of her face, as it had been the day before, and taken off the shaggy red wig she had worn, both making a great improvement, for she was a very handsome young woman in spite of her masculine and rough garb.

She glanced over the card and said slowly:

"I have heard of you often as the Surgeon Scout, and I am glad to meet you indeed."

"I owe you a debt of gratitude I can

never forget, as you avenged me and many others, while you freed the world of a fiend."

"How I could have once loved Buckner Bolton Heaven only knows; but the loves of woman are beyond finding out and I am a woman."

"I shall only be content when I see him in his grave, and then the past shall be wiped out utterly from my life; but I shall not forget you, sir," and she held out her hand.

Grasping it an instant, and raising his hat, Frank Powell rode on and soon reached the camp of the men he sought.

He saw the trail leading from there, a trail left by seven horses, and he followed it easily, for it was a fresh one.

CHAPTER XII.

TWO TRAILS.

DOCTOR FRANK POWELL was a man who read border signs with the skill of an Indian.

He saw that the trail of the seven horses was fresh, had not been made over twelve hours before.

He read more, for he could see by the way that four of the animals moved that they had riders, while the other three were out of the trail half the time, and were pack-horses, driven on ahead.

The Surgeon Scout thought over his adventure in Bed Rock as he rode along.

He had gone there in search of one man who had wronged him, just how he kept to himself, and had discovered that two others who had been Dunston's allies against him in the wrong, had sought him out in the mines and united their fortunes with his.

There was one other with them, Paul Paxton, but with him the Surgeon Scout had no quarrel; with the others it was a quarrel that must be carried to the bitter end.

To carry out what he deemed his duty in this matter he had resigned from the army, and now alone he was a Nemesis upon the trail of his three foes.

Many a man would have sought aid, others would have thought long before going alone upon a trail so desperate as one against four, for naturally would Paul Paxton side with his comrades.

But Frank Powell was a man who knew no fear.

He had a duty to perform, he knew he was right, and he would accomplish it alone or take the consequences.

Buck Bolton the gambler had seen fit to quarrel with him, and he had not shunned the meeting, for well he knew that Colonel Merrill and all at the fort longed to see the desperado run down.

They had tried to get some hold upon him, and yet he had escaped them, his cunning always extricating him from trouble, while it would have been war between the soldiers and the miners to attempt to take the man by force.

He was wanted for his crimes, and yet had gone free.

Shattering his hand with his shot, the Surgeon Scout had allowed him his life, to in the end have to kill him, and then had come the denouement of Little Nugget's strange story, which but revealed the more glaringly the gambler's life of crime.

These things floated through the mind of the doctor as he rode along.

But his eyes were on the trail, his wits at work the while, and he drew rein and gazed down at the tracks before him.

He had seen fresh tracks come in from the left into the trail of those he followed.

They were the tracks of two shod horses, and they were pushing along at a lively pace.

The trail led down from the mountains in the direction of Bed Rock City, and the doctor decided that they had been made after those he followed had gone along.

"Yes, this trail was made several hours later than Dunston's," he muttered.

He then mused, as he gazed at the two trails:

"Dunston saw me go into Bed Rock, and at once decided to get out."

"He sold out to Gambler Bolton, and with his companions packed up and left."

"I cannot believe that it is coward fear that drives those men to fly from me, only the conviction that they have wronged me,

and do not wish to add to their sin by taking my life to save their own.

"They have gone, but where?"

"Well, I am on their trail, and will go to the end of it.

"But this second trail?"

"It appears to me that one of these horses had a rider, the other carried a pack-saddle.

"It is hours fresher than Dunston's, comes from Bed Rock City, was made in the night, and—is Demon Dick's trail.

"Little Nugget, that strange girl, bade me look out for Demon Dick.

"He knows that I came to find Dunston, and, after my killing his pard, the gambler, he sought to rob him, and had to fly for his life.

"Misery loves company, and he has hastened on after the Dunston party to tell them I am on their trail, thus currying favor with them.

"Maybe he will seek to ambush me, for he knows that I won considerable money last night, and thus get my gold.

"I must go slow and keep a bright lookout ahead, for it will not do to be brought down by that desperado from an ambush.

"No, I must live for work yet to be done."

So saying the Surgeon Scout rode on until he halted for breakfast, after which he mounted and continued following the two trails, little daunted by the fact that he had five foes ahead of him.

CHAPTER XIII.

FLANKING A FOE.

WHEN noon came Frank Powell halted again.

He had ridden at a brisk, steady pace, the trail of the two horses showing that it had been made hours before, and hours after that of the seven horses.

The doctor read these signs unerringly, and came to the conclusion that Demon Dick, whose trail he was certain it was, had decided not to overtake those in advance until he had first ambushed him and gotten his gold.

Then he could go on and show the others his horses and put their minds at rest regarding the relentless foe they knew would be on their track.

Coming to a part of the country which would enable him to make a flank movement unseen, and observing many long miles ahead the pass in a mountain range through which the trails must go, Surgeon Powell came to the decision to make a halt and then push rapidly on with the intention of striking the trail again near the pass.

This would enable him to see if all were lying in ambush for him, which he did not believe, or if Demon Dick had passed along still on the trail of the Dunston party.

If he had not it would mean that he was lying in ambush for him back somewhere on the trail.

So he rode rapidly, for he knew that his horse would stand hard work, and came to a high ridge not very far from the mountain range while the sun was yet a couple of hours high.

He unsaddled his horses and staked them out to feed and rest, while he went down into the valley to cross the trail he had been following.

He came upon it a couple of miles away.

A glance showed him that Demon Dick had not passed along.

"He is in ambush for me, as I thought," muttered Doctor Powell.

Then he returned to his horses, and began, from the top of a high point, to reconnoiter the trail through his glass.

It was a long time before he could trace its way, but at last a moving object caught his eyes.

Gazing intently he saw that it was a horse, and a second one was not far away.

They were unsaddled and staked out in the mouth of a canyon.

Had he been on the Dunston trail he could not have seen them.

The Surgeon Scout at once took in the situation.

Had Demon Dick pressed on to overtake Dunston and his party he would by that time have been through the mountain range.

If those were his horses he saw, he was all of twenty miles behind Dunston.

With fresh horses to start with, he had not halted at that hour to rest, for he had not pushed them hard except in his first hours of flight from Bed Rock City.

He was not very far from the horses, and the glass revealed a spur around which Dunston's trail had wound.

This appeared to be about half a mile from the two horses, and there, or not far from the point, Demon Dick must be.

Having come to this decision Frank Powell returned to his horses, saddled them and rode back on the trail the way he had come.

He came into it just before sunset, and continued on as before.

He saw the point a couple of miles ahead, where he felt sure that Demon Dick must be.

The moon would rise about the time the sun set, and at its full the trail would be visible.

Halting by the trail, the Surgeon Scout set about accomplishing a plan that had flashed into his brain, and which he had successfully carried out before when Indians were concerned.

He took from his pack a hat, coat and pants, and stuffed them with other clothing.

The hat was fastened on to what was shaped to look like a head and face, and the form was placed in his saddle and fastened there, braced securely with sticks cut for the purpose.

The rifle was laid across the saddle and made fast.

Standing off and looking at his dummy form in the light of the rising moon, the surgeon was glad to see that it looked just what it was intended to represent—himself.

Some of the rest of the traps were then taken from the pack-horse and put behind the dummy rider, and Frank Powell next began to arrange that he should appear to be the pack.

In this position, though by no means a comfortable one, he could ride on ahead, as though the pack-horse was being driven, leaving the dummy rider to follow, led by a lariat, half a dozen paces behind.

With a revolver in each hand, and playing pack, Frank Powell rode on into the ambush he felt sure Demon Dick had arranged for him.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEMON DICK.

As has been stated, Demon Dick was about as hard a citizen as Bed Rock City could boast of and that was saying a very great deal.

Buck Bolton was a gambler, a murderer, and it was said cheated at cards, but no one would suspect him of being an assassin and a common thief.

Demon Dick was suspected of being both. If he was not openly accused, it was because he had too strong a pull with the bad element, and was too much feared.

He was known to be the close friend of Buck Bolton.

Just why no one could understand.

Bolton was certainly a man of education, of gentlemanly instincts, and had been reared in refinement.

Demon Dick was low in origin, vulgar, and had brute written all over his face.

Still the two were fast friends.

When Buck Bolton wished a second in the duel with Surgeon Powell, Demon Dick was the man chosen.

A giant in strength, quick as a cat in his movements, deadly in aim and a terror with his knife the desperado was a man to fear.

He had seconded Buck Bolton, and he had seen his master and hero fall.

He at once left the saloon.

His mind was made up in a flash.

With Bolton dead he, Demon Dick, no longer had any business in Bed Rock City.

He dared not remain there, for the gambler's taking off would create a desire in the minds of many to purify the community, and he would be about the first example sought, he felt assured.

So he decided to light out.

There were others, of his clique, who would be only too glad to go with him, to gracefully leave the camps, had they known of his intention.

But Demon Dick was of a selfish nature.

What he wished, he desired to have alone.

With his determination to leave the camps was a desire to carry with him all of this world's goods that he could conveniently take along.

He was well supplied with horses, had the best in the camps, and his arms were splendid weapons.

In his cabin, where he dwelt alone with a boon companion, he had laid aside a thousand or two in gold which he had gained by fair means, and foul, almost invariably the latter.

His comrade also had about an equal sum in hiding, gained in the same manner.

Demon Dick knew the hiding-place of his friend's gold, and so he took that with his own.

He hastily packed an animal with his traps, and mounting another, choosing the two best ones he owned, he started on his trail out of Bed Rock City.

His trail led very naturally to the home of the gambler.

He was familiar with it, and knew where the key was kept, though Bolton had never suspected that he did.

He got the key, hitched his horses near, entered the cabin and lighted the lamp.

There were three rooms in the cabin, and Demon Dick knew that there was a small fortune in weapons, another in fine blankets, *serapes* and clothing, a third in jewelry and a fourth in gold.

He would take some of the weapons, a few of the *serapes*, unearth the jewelry, mostly watches and rings won from the miners, and then the gold bags, for in his sneaking way Demon Dick had watched the gambler night after night, until he found out where he kept his treasure.

He selected from the weapons several rifles, revolvers and knives, wrapping them securely in the *serapes*.

Then he got out some of the provisions with which the place was well stocked, for the gambler lived well, and had a Chinese cook who came daily to prepare his meals for him and wait on him.

These were carefully wrapped up, and placed with the weapons to put away in the pack-saddle.

Then he took a look at his horses.

They were still there, and the pack-animal was led up and hitched to the door.

He listened, but heard no sound, saw no one.

Then he went to the hiding-place of the jewelry and gold.

It was in one of the timbers, which, supposed to be a solid log, had been hollowed out for the purpose of hiding away valuables.

He had spread a *serape* upon the floor, with a lariat to tie it up securely, and was just getting out the little gold bags when he heard voices.

He bounded to the door and listened.

There was no mistaking the sound, and that many men were hastening toward the cabin.

In fact the bright moonlight revealed them to him.

He knew what capture meant, and with a bound he was in his saddle, and leading his pack-horse was away at full speed, followed by shots rattling about him as he fled.

CHAPTER XV.

IN AMBUSH.

SAVAGE were the curses that fell from the lips of the fugitive robber as he rode away in flight.

"Fool that I was!"

"If I had not stopped to get those weapons and *serapes*, valuable though they are, I could have gotten away with the gold and jewelry.

"As it is my greed to get all lost me all.

"I dare not stop now until I am miles away from here, for I will be taken and strung up.

"With a night's start I can put fifty miles between me and the camps before daybreak, and then they will not follow me.

"Oh! what an accursed fool I was not to get all, for I would have been a rich man.

"As it is, I have only a few thousands, and I dare not stay on this border, for some one will recognize me and that will mean a rope."

He pressed rapidly on with no more definite purpose in view than to get to a place of safety.

It was late in the night when he halted, and it was where there was a smoldering camp-fire, on the banks of a small stream.

The moon was shining brightly, and he was convinced that some one had halted there for a short while only, for why had they not remained all night?

"Ah! I have it now.

"They are the Gentlemen Miners whom that army surgeon came to Bed Rock City to find, and who lit out when they saw him come into the camps.

"They must be afraid of the rope that they should have dug out at sight of him.

"And they have gone this way, and sold out to Buck Bolton for a good price.

"Now why can't I overtake them, warn them of the intentions of the Surgeon Scout to follow them, and thus make myself solid with them?

"I guess I can do it, and will.

"Yes, I'll push on again and overhaul them to-morrow some time.

"Now I think of it the Surgeon Scout will follow them, for he said as much to Gambler Bolton.

"He's game to do it, and alone, but then I know his record well, and no gamer man can be found on this frontier.

"Yes, he'll do it; but then he's human and a bullet will bring him down same as it will any other man, and I'm the one to do it.

"I can avenge Buck Bolton, and more, I can get the money he won to-night, and it was several thousands, along with his weapons, horses, traps and maybe more money he has about him.

"He carried a fine watch and chain I noticed, and a fine ring and scarf-pin, and I'll get all.

"Then the four gents ahead will be glad I put him out of the way, and I can get to be good pals with them and play my cards to get their boodle in some way.

"Yes, I'll be a rich man yet, the way it looks now."

Having decided upon his course he pushed on once more, but before daylight went into camp.

It was after sunrise when he arose, cooked his breakfast and started again.

He naturally supposed the Surgeon Scout would not leave Bed Rock City before dawn, when he could see to follow the trail of the men he had come to find.

Leaving, as he had, at once on the fall of the gambler, he had not seen what followed, and knew nothing as to Little Nugget's making known her secret.

Again on the trail he rode on until near noon when he came to a ridge that ended abruptly and around which the trail wound.

The trail kept close to the spur, which was heavily wooded, and with heavy rocks scattered about, the very spot for an ambush, for the nature of the ground beyond would compel one to ride within easy revolver range of a very secure hiding place.

"This is my chance right here, for I cannot find a better spot.

"I will ride on and find a good place for the horses, cook dinner and then return and wait in ambush for him.

"If he does not come alone, then I can lie quiet and that ends it.

"If he comes alone, or with only one person, I will bring them both down, and here there is no escape."

He rode on, found a canyon off the trail where there was wood, water and grass, staked his horses out, cooked his dinner and enough besides for a cold supper while in ambush, and returning to the point of rocks searched about and found just the hiding-place he wanted.

Then he spread his blanket and sat down to await the coming of the man he intended to murder and rob.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SURGEON SCOUT'S RUSE.

THE sun set and Demon Dick ate his supper in silence, his eyes upon the trail, back over which he could see for over a mile.

The moon rose and the skies being cloudless he could still see a long distance.

If the Surgeon Scout had started promptly

upon the trail in the morning, he should, riding at a fairly brisk pace, reach the spur by nightfall or soon after.

Back on the trail there was not a stream, or a tree for a number of miles, so that, though he might not be able to follow the tracks in the moonlight, the Surgeon Scout would doubtless push on until he came to a good camping-place, Demon Dick argued to himself.

Then too the nature of the country was such that he could push on by night without much fear of losing the trail, as it would lead for the pass ahead through the mountain range.

"He must soon be along, unless he has halted to camp, and I do not believe he has done that," said Demon Dick, when half an hour had gone by.

He was just beginning to grow sleepy, when he heard the sharp click of iron upon stone.

The shoe of a horse had struck a stone he knew at once and he was all attention.

Then he saw coming along the trail like phantoms in the moonlight the shadow outlines of a horse and rider.

Soon he saw that there were two horses, one a pack animal driven on in front of the horseman.

The moonlight glimmered upon brass buttons, and the heart of Demon Dick leaped with joy as he said:

"It is my man!

"Now to avenge Buck Bolton, and make a strike for gold for myself."

He got his rifle ready, a fine weapon it was too, rested it upon the rock before him, and took long and deliberate aim.

The horses came along slowly, and the desperado in ambush awaited until a turn in the trail brought them directly fronting him, the moonlight shining full upon the brass buttons on the breast of the Surgeon Scout's uniform.

Then there came a flash over the rock, a sharp report, and quickly following it another and another.

The assassin intended to be sure.

Even the thud of the bullets as they struck came to his ears, it seemed.

The horses started, half turned, the form in the saddle fell forward, then backward, reeled to one side and dropped to the ground, while the two animals stood close together in apparent fright.

Over the rock leaped Demon Dick, a stifled yell of triumph breaking from his lips, and bounding down the ridge he rapidly approached the horses, standing by the form lying upon the ground.

He spoke soothingly to the animals as he approached, so as to quiet them, and was within ten feet of them, when the pack seemed to slip off of the back of one of them, and developed into the form of a man.

At the same time a revolver was thrust forward, and a voice cried sternly:

"Hands up, Demon Dick!"

But with a yell of terror Demon Dick tried to bring his rifle to his shoulder and fire.

He was not quick enough, for the revolver of the Surgeon Scout flashed first and Demon Dick dropped backward a dead man.

"I did not wish to kill him, but he forced me to do so," muttered the Surgeon Scout as he stepped forward, bent over and placed his hand upon the pulse of his intended assassin.

"Dead!"

It was all that he said.

Then he walked up to his horses and raised the dummy form from the ground.

It was held by the lariats, which he had cleverly arranged to drag it from the saddle when it was fired upon.

"Well, pard, you saved my life, and you got three bullets into you, any one of which would have been fatal had you been in reality a man.

"The first one was fired at the face and well aimed, the other two at the body, and they have bored holes in my coat just where my heart would be.

"Yes, he shot to kill.

"But now I can carry the body into his camp and remain over until morning, for to-morrow I can press on more rapidly, and those men will not ambush me—no, they will not do that, bad as they are."

He threw the body across the pack-horse, mounted his own animal, placing the

dummy behind him which had served him so well, and rode on in search of the desperado's camp.

He had marked its locality in a canyon, when he had seen the horses in the afternoon, so had little trouble in finding it, and soon had his own animals watered and staked out.

Then he set to work to bury the body of his foe, and did so with the same care he would have bestowed upon a friend, after which he built a fire, had supper and turned in for the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE UNDAUNTED TRAILER.

As though there was not a newly-made grave within a few rods of him, the man within it placed there by his hand, Doctor Frank Powell sunk into a peaceful sleep.

With regret at having to take life, he yet had perfect control over his nerves, and willing himself to sleep, to drive bitter thoughts from him, he had the power to do so.

It was not dawn when he awoke, after a good, long sleep.

The moon was near the horizon of a distant range, the air was chilly, and he quickly threw some wood on the fire.

Then he went out and changed the feeding places of the four horses, after watering them, to where the grass was fresh and good.

Adding to his fire he cooked a substantial breakfast and ate it with the air of one who had a good appetite and whose digestion was perfect.

What the day had in store for him did not trouble him then in the least.

What of trouble and danger might arise, he would meet it when it came, not worry about it then.

Having put away his breakfast traps, and replaced the dummy, which had just served him so well, in the pack, he then turned to what he had found on the body of the dead desperado.

There was a buckskin belt well filled with gold, a watch and massive gold chain, some bags of gold in the saddle pocket, and other belongings of little value, in the way of bedding and camp utensils, with some provisions.

Having divided the packs more evenly, allowing his own riding horse to carry as little weight beside his own, as was necessary, he mounted and renewed his journey, leaving Demon Dick resting in an unknown and unhonored grave, for there was nothing about the body to give any clue to his name, or who he was, or what he had been.

Again taking the trail of the seven horses on ahead, he pushed along at a brisk pace.

The three he now had with him, he tied together by their stake-ropes and led in single file, for they all followed readily.

Getting off by sunrise he kept a steady pace until noon where he halted for an hour, and where he knew that those he followed had also camped.

They had doubtless held on pretty steadily through the night, and until noon of the next day before making any lengthy halt.

"I am gaining, for I am, in spite of delays, about twenty-four hours behind them, and by to-night's camp will cut down considerable of that time," he said.

After an hour's rest he again started and seeing that none of the four horses were feeling the pace he had set he kept it up.

When the night halt was made, just when it was too dark to further see the trail, and he was afraid of losing it and going astray, he camped where he felt certain the Dunston party had spent the night before.

"Just twelve hours now, for they did not leave here until sunrise this morning, as the trail shows," he muttered with apparent satisfaction.

He found splendid grass and water at hand for his horses, and as soon as he had cooked supper, smoked his pipe and turned into his blankets to get all the rest he could.

Refreshed by a long sleep he awoke in time to get breakfast, saddle up and be ready for the start the first glimmer of light.

He was a mile or more on his way in fact before he was able to see the trail, taking

chances that the party had gone the way he started out upon.

When he saw that he was right he set the same brisk pace he had kept up the day before and, with only an occasional short halt, held it up to noon.

Then his experienced eye told him that the trail he had followed had grown fresher, and he knew that his foes were not many hours ahead of him.

As night came on he saw far ahead the glimmer of a light.

"It is their camp-fire," he said aloud.

Going on he soon after staked out the three led horses, and made his way nearer to the fire.

Then he dismounted and went forward on foot.

He approached cautiously, and beheld a small camp.

About a fire sat four men, eating their supper, and in the background were their horses.

Returning to his horses, he led them to a good camping-place, staked them out, and then, by the moonlight, looked carefully to his weapons, his rifle and revolvers.

The former he swung at his back and then on foot he set out for the camp of David Dunston and his companions.

Soon he came near, and he saw that they had finished their supper and were smoking their pipes and chatting together, apparently little dreaming that Nemesis was upon their track.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FUGITIVES IN CAMP.

AROUND the camp-fire sat four men, three of whom Frank Powell had dared to follow on a trail of retribution.

They were men far above the stamp of the ordinary miner, one and all of them seemingly having been raised amid refining influences and possessing an education.

Dressed in miner's garb, they yet looked not the rough specimens seen so often in mining-camps.

Their camping-outfit was a good one, with enough cooking utensils and provisions of the best kind.

Their *serapes* were numerous, they had rubber blankets, a canvas shelter and their horses were good animals all of them, and were staked out near to feed.

One of the four had laid aside his pipe and was lost in deep meditation, while the others were talking together.

"What are you thinking so intently about, Dunston?" asked one of his comrades.

He started, flushed slightly, and knocking the ashes out of his pipe replied earnestly:

"I was just thinking of Doctor Frank Powell."

"Naturally, as he has been the subject of conversation the past half-hour."

"True, we were discussing as to how we could avoid him, how keep him from finding us, and as to whether he had come to Bed Rock to find us."

"You say you do not think so, and I say I know that he did."

"I know Frank Powell better than any other man, for we were boys together, went to school together, and studied medicine in the same doctor's office."

"Oh, yes, I know him well, and no truer, nobler man ever drew the breath of life, and he is as true as steel to a friend, as true as death to a foe."

"There is Indian in his nature, and he is not one to forget or forgive an injury such as I was led into doing him by being an arrant fool."

"No, no, we were guilty of wronging him and his, those he loved as one of his nature only can love, and we made him feel, suffer and drove him almost to despair, we three, you, Valour, you, Turpin and myself."

"Fortunately for yourself, Paxton, you are out of it."

David Dunston spoke with intense earnestness, and when he had ceased speaking Dabney Turpin said with a sneer:

"So feeling, Dunston, you should seek Powell out and throw yourself upon his mercy, not fly from him."

"Why do we all fly from him?"

"Because we fear him?"

"No! oh no! but because our own guilty consciences tell us that we have wronged him beyond forgiveness, and we shun him because we know he will seek our lives and we do not wish to add still deeper stain to our lives by killing him, for we are three against one."

"I found a retreat in the mines, struck it fairly rich and you came there."

"Then we saw Powell appear upon the scene, and we sold out within an hour, sold a property worth a fortune for a few thousands, and skipped."

"Must we be driven thus through life?" asked Merton Valour.

"I suppose we must, unless we stop and fight it out with Frank Powell."

"I, for one, am in favor of doing so," said Valour.

"As I am," added Dabney Turpin.

"I am your comrade, gentlemen, so stand by you," Paul Paxton remarked, and all waited for David Dunston's reply.

It came at last, and was thoughtfully uttered:

"Pards, if I was brought to bay by Frank Powell, I would face him and end it one way or the other."

"I should hate to take his life, but to save my own would do so, for you know what my deadly aim is."

"If I did not kill him, he would kill me; but I will avoid him as long as I can, for I do not wish to put a heavier load upon my conscience than the one I now bear."

"Now you know that I will seek no trouble, but avoid it, and if your lot is cast with mine you must do the same, for you are as deep in the wrong as I am, in a measure, and he has the right to seek retributive justice from you as he has from me."

"Well, we do not wish to part from you, David, so will cling together; but it is a fearful thought that we have to be dodging through life with a Nemesis upon our track," said Turpin.

"It is not pleasant; but if you and Dunston can stand it, I can," Valour remarked.

"I am with you, pards, whatever happens" added Paul Paxton.

"Do you think Powell will be on the hunt for us, Dunston?" asked Valour.

"He is a man always prepared to meet friend or foe, and if he comes upon us, you may be sure that he will seek revenge," and as David Dunston spoke a tall form suddenly advanced into full view in the circle of firelight about them.

It was Frank Powell, the Nemesis.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE AVENGER OF CRUEL WRONGS.

THE form suddenly appearing before the four men reclining about the camp-fire was like an apparition to them.

Was it a form called up by their imagination, or a reality?

A second glance showed that it was not an apparition, but a form of real flesh and blood.

The Surgeon Scout himself stood before them.

Tall, manly, calm, but white-faced with the intensity of his feelings, he stood there gazing upon the men he had tracked so untiringly.

"Gentlemen, I am here, and that means that I have come for the justice of retribution."

"I am here to face you one by one, if your coward hearts do not shrink from the ordeal of singly facing me, or together all of you, if your cowardice is such that you are driven to fight me with such odds."

"It is for you to say."

Every word was distinctly uttered.

There was no misunderstanding them.

There was no reason of saying they did not hear every word spoken.

A deaf man could have heard them, so distinct was their utterance.

There stood the avenger, his arms folded upon his broad breast, his piercing eyes gazing from one to the other of the three men he had sought.

In response to his words Dunston spoke.

The others seemed to expect it of him.

He said, and there was a quiver in his voice:

"Doctor Powell, I said but a short while ago that you had reason to seek retribution, for justice we could not offer."

"To beg for pardon would be but mockery."

"We sought to avoid you, for we did not wish to face you."

"You have trailed us here, and you come for revenge."

"We can but grant it, not as four cowards, such as you throw it in our teeth we might prove, but as brave men and singly."

"It is better than I expected of you, for guilty men are invariably cowardly."

"With that gentleman I have no quarrel, and seek none, unless he seeks one with me as your foe," and he looked at Paul Paxton who responded promptly:

"I am the friend of these gentlemen whose foe you are, and I accept the situation with them."

"My dear sir, there is no need for two men who have no feeling against each other to meet in deadly combat."

"A few nights since I was forced to kill one, Buck Bolton, a desperado, because he took up the quarrel against three men."

"Buck Bolton dead?" gasped David Dunston.

"Yes, he said he was answerable for you, and as I knew him to be a murderer and scoundrel of the blackest kind, I was not averse to ridding the earth of him, when, having spared his life he became treacherous."

"His comrade, Demon Dick, ambushed me on my trail after you, and I had to kill him too."

"You, sir, though in bad company, are of a different caliber I take it from Bolton and Demon Dick, and I will not meet you unless you force it upon me."

"On the contrary, as the friend of these gentlemen, see that they have fair play in facing me, for meet me they must, as, though I will not make known the wrongs they have been guilty of against me, I keeping all as a dead secret, I will tell you that they can only be wiped out by their death or mine."

"When you are ready, gentlemen, I am wholly at your service."

The Surgeon Scout turned away from the fire, showing no dread of his foes in placing them at his back, and walking apart in the moonlight, there awaited the arrangements for the triple duel that must be fought in that lonely camp.

Dunston and his comrades talked earnestly together for awhile, and the former said as they concluded:

"Congratulate yourself, Paxton, that you are out of it—would to God I was."

"But we have told you all, and should we fall, which I do not fear will be the case with me, you know what to do with our papers and effects."

"Frank Powell has justly, I admit, sought retribution, but he must take the consequences, and he is to meet three as dangerous men as he is."

"I will first meet him, Paxton, and you may so tell him."

Paul Paxton walked up to Frank Powell and said politely:

"Surgeon Powell, it is arranged that you fight with revolvers at ten paces, firing at the word, and but one shot in each case, after which if there is no one injured, the duel to be declared off."

"My dear sir, I thought those friends of yours knew me better, for I did not come here for child's play."

"I resigned my commission in the army to hunt down those men, who have wronged me as no man can and live, or let me live."

"These duels are to be to the death, and one shot is all I ask, or need, in each case, but there must be no thought of else than it means death to the man I face or to myself."

"I would suggest, sir, to get the matter quickly over, that your three friends be placed ten paces from me, and ten paces apart, Mr. Valour being Number One, Mr. Turpin Number Two, and David Dunston Number Three, for he must be the last, as he was the first to strike the blow against me for which I demand retribution."

"You can give the word in each case, and as soon as shots have been exchanged with Number One, I will turn to Two and Three."

"Do you accept my plan, sir?"

"I do, for I wish this strange affair soon done with."

"From these men's own confession I know

that you have reason for what you do, and as a second I shall be as just to you as to them, with a leaning to greater fairness to you as the odds are so greatly against you," and Paul Paxton returned to his friends.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIPLE DUEL.

"He is a bold man indeed, to make such a proposition, Paxton, as to face literally three men at a time.

"As I understand it, we are to take three corners of a square, he the fourth, and this will place him facing Valour, standing obliquely to Turpin, and with me upon one side, all of us with our weapons, and it would be easy enough for me to pick him off while he fires at Valour or Turpin."

"You surely do not say that in earnest, Dunston, for if you do you forget that I am here for fair play, and a hostile movement of your hand would be your death sentence from my revolver," said Paul Paxton with indignation in look and words, and though not intended for the ears of Doctor Powell he heard the words distinctly, and at once felt that he had in Paxton one who would see to it that he was not treacherously dealt with.

Whatever had been Dunston's real intention at heart, the stand of Paul Paxton for fair play at once showed him that it would be dangerous to attempt treachery, and he glanced at Turpin in a way that showed he, too, had suspected his intention.

"Well, pard, the doctor is ready, and I suppose you have looked to your weapons?"

"We have, and, as Doctor Powell has entered upon this work, we are in it to stay," said Dunston.

Paul Paxton then slipped out into the moonlight beyond the timber, glanced to see where the moon was, and said:

"The one who stands with his back to the moonlight will have the better position, with the light falling full upon the others—shall we toss up for position, Surgeon Powell?"

"You are kind, sir, to think of the advantage for or against me, and I thank you.

"We will toss up for the position."

"Yes, kinder to you than to his friends," sneered Turpin.

"Oh, no, I am but fair to all, as far as I can be when seconding three men against one," was the quick retort.

Taking from his pocket as he spoke a twenty-dollar gold piece, he called out as he tossed it into the air:

"Heads or tails, doctor?"

"Head!"

All went and bent over the gold piece as it lay in the moonlight, Valour being checked by Paxton as he attempted to pick it up.

"Heads it is, doctor," said Paxton.

Then he took a position with his back toward the moonlight, and stepped off ten paces in an oblique direction.

Here he called Valour to take his stand.

At another point ten paces from Valour he placed Turpin, and at the third position, also ten paces from the start and finish, Dunston was placed.

"Doctor Powell, here is your position, sir, as you won it."

The surgeon stepped forward and took it. "May I ask, sir, should you fall, if there is anything I can do for you?"

"Thank you, yes; consider yourself heir to what I have along with me, and notify Colonel Merrill at Fort M— of my death, and how it occurred."

"I will, sir."

"You all understand that I am to give the words as follows:

"Are you ready?"

"You are to have your revolvers in your belts until I say fire, and then draw and fire.

"The moment the result of the first interchange of shots is known, I will repeat the order as before, to Number Two, which will be you, Turpin, Valour being Number One.

"Again, when the result is known the same command follows for Number Three, you, Dunston.

"Do you all understand?"

"Perfectly," said Frank Powell, and the others answered in the affirmative also.

"Should any one fire before the word, I

shall use my prerogative and kill him, be he who he may.

"Let this be thoroughly understood."

"May I speak a word with you, Paxton?"

The request came from Turpin, and Paxton stepped quickly to his side.

"It will be worth a fortune to you if you fire on Powell before you give the word to fire," whispered Turpin.

"Does Dunston understand this proposition to me?"

"Yes."

"And Valour?"

"Yes."

"Let me say to you frankly if Powell is killed our friendship ends to-night, for I go my way alone.

"You have mistaken your man in suspecting I could be guilty of treachery, murder or any mean act."

"Curse you!" hissed Dabney Turpin as Paul Paxton turned from him, and walked to his position behind Dunston a few paces.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" he called out quickly, as though he feared some act of treachery on the part of the three who had been his friends.

"Ready," came distinctly from the surgeon's lips, with low uttered words from the others.

"Fire!"

There were quick motions from Frank Powell and Valour, but only one shot.

Frank Powell's bullet pierced the brain of Valour before the other could level his weapon.

"Replace your revolvers!"

"Are you ready?"

"Fire!"

Again there was but one shot, for Turpin was a dead man, a bullet striking between his eyes before he could take aim.

"Replace revolvers!"

"Are you ready?" cried Paul Paxton in quick, decided tones, after a glance at the two dead forms of his companions.

"Fire!"

"This time there were two reports, for David Dunston was a quick hand with his revolver and a dead shot as well.

But he sunk in his tracks with a red mark on his forehead, while his bullet cut through the crown of Frank Powell's hat, just clipping the scalp.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM FOES TO FRIENDS.

"You have killed them, sir!" said Paul Paxton in a subdued tone, turning to Frank Powell, who with his arms folded upon his broad breast, his revolver still grasped in his fatal right hand, stood like a statue in the moonlight, gazing down upon those who had once been his friends, but who had afterward wronged him beyond forgiveness, wronged him in a way that he held in his heart as a dead secret.

"I intended to kill them.

"I am not remorseless, or merciless, nor cruel, save where those three men were concerned.

"They have met but a just retribution.

"Did you know their crimes against me and mine you would say so.

"But I thank you, sir, for your great kindness to me, and I appreciate it," and he held out his hand, which Paul Paxton warmly grasped with the remark:

"I knew that they carried some secret which they kept religiously from me; but we were friends and partners, so I went with them—but see, you are wounded," and a tiny stream of blood flowed down across the face of Surgeon Powell as he raised his hat.

"A mere scratch, for Dunston's bullet clipped the scalp; but it was a close call."

"Permit me to see to it for you."

"It was but a gash, and Paul Paxton soon dressed the wound under the directions of Frank Powell, who then said:

"Our first duty is now to bury the dead.

"I suppose you have instructions regarding their effects?"

"Yes, they bade me send information home of their death, with a few of their effects, while their gold as their partner I was to keep; but I shall send that also, everything in fact belonging to them, save their horses and equipments."

"You are a good man, Mr. Paxton, and I hope that we may be friends.

"I have with me the horses and outfit of Demon Dick, which I shall also turn over to you for your use, for the money he had I intend to send to the fort and have it given to the family of the officer he killed, for they are poor.

"As you were doing well in Rock Bed City, I would suggest that you return there, relate the happening here to-night just as it occurred, and I will give you a line to one who I know will be glad to have in you an adviser and friend, and allow you to look after her interests there, for she needs just such a friend.

"I refer to Gambler Bolton's wife."

"Bolton's wife?"

"I did not know that there was a woman in Bed Rock camps?"

"Do you recall a boy by the name of Little Nugget?"

"Yes, a bright, sad-faced youth, shy, and it was said lucky in finds."

"It is the one I refer to, not a boy, but Ethel Bolton, the gambler's wife.

"She seconded me in my duel with him, and I avenged wrongs she had suffered at his hands.

"She made herself known after his death, and is now in full possession of his property."

"Why you astound me, Surgeon Powell."

"I tell you only the truth, and without her red wig, and with the dirt she smeared her face with washed off, she is a very handsome woman, and I know that you can befriend her by returning to Bed Rock, and secure an interest in your old mine, for it was a paying one."

"I will do as you advise, sir, for I am but a rolling stone, with few ties to call me elsewhere, and I love this Wild West life."

"I shall ask you also, Mr. Paxton, to write a letter to Colonel Merrill of Fort M—, telling him of my affair in Bed Rock, then with Demon Dick, and later here to-night.

"Send him the money I will turn over to you, for the officer's family, and tell him I have decided to go off on a scout, and later will return to the fort."

"I will do just as you request me, Doctor Powell, in all things," was the answer.

Then the Surgeon Scout went after his horses and soon returned with them, to find that Paul Paxton had overlooked the bodies of his dead comrades, taken what was valuable from them, and wrapping them in blankets, tightly wound around with lariats, had placed them in a row off in the timber where he was digging a grave.

Having staked his horses out with the others, Surgeon Powell went and aided in digging the grave, in spite of Paul Paxton's protest that he could do so alone.

It was after midnight a couple of hours, when the three men were buried decently, and logs and rocks placed upon their grave to prevent the coyotes from tearing up the bodies.

Then the two men, so strangely met and become friends, lay down upon their blankets and sunk to sleep, Paul Paxton musing to himself as he heard the steady breathing of his companion that betokened slumber:

"That is the most remarkable man I ever knew, a man of an iron nerve, the courage of a lion, and a noble heart.

"He has avenged a great wrong done him, and now is content to let the dead past bury its dead."

And Paul Paxton also drifted off into forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XXII.

STANDING OFF RED-SKINS.

A low whining from one of Surgeon Powell's horses caught the ear of the sleeping master, and at once he was upon his feet.

"What is it, Rattler?" he said, as he arose and peered out upon the plain lit up by the bright moonlight.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked Paul Paxton, rising quickly.

"My horse Rattler aroused me with a warning and he never makes a mistake.

"He is as good as a watch-dog, and with his instinct of danger is better than a human

sentinel," and the surgeon walked toward the horses, followed by Paxton.

As he came up to Rattler, a splendid roan, they saw the animal standing with ears pricked up gazing far out on the plains.

"What is it, Rattler?"

"Indians, maybe, for we are in a locality where it is possible to meet a roving band."

With this the doctor turned his powerful field-glass out over the country, moving it slowly and gazing intently through it.

"Yes, there is a party of horsemen coming, but they are yet a couple of miles away."

"Rattler scented them, for the wind blows from them in this direction."

"They may be Indians, perhaps miners from Bed Rock, but we must prepare for foes, and be ready to greet friends if friends they are."

"To save time, Pard Paxton, will you gather up the camp-traps while I lead the horses up among the rocks yonder on that spur, where the spring is?"

"We will be sheltered there, and can appear to be as many men as the horses represent, eleven all told."

The two then separated, the surgeon hastily pulling up the stake-ropes of the horses, the seven of the Dunston party, the two of Demon Dick and his own two.

These he led up to the camp, where the packs and saddles were placed upon them, and the traps that were loose, and they started for the rocky hill, an acre in size and which was heavily timbered, and had a spring in its midst.

A good camping-place was found, the horses were staked under short lines to crop the sparse grass about them, and the two companions turned their attention to the coming horsemen, Surgeon Powell again looking through his glass.

"They are Indians, and there are a dozen of them at least, but we must make a show of equal strength when called upon to do so."

"They are coming to this camp, and I do not think suspect our presence here."

"We will give them a surprise then, sir."

"Yes, and a surprise is half the battle."

"We will take the weapons of your comrades and of Demon Dick, all repeating rifles, and our own, and I think that we can astonish those red-skins."

"Demon Dick has also a couple of other good weapons, which we can hold in reserve, after emptying the others."

With the naked eye now the horsemen could be seen coming directly toward the timber where the camp had been, and seemingly suspecting no one's being there, or near among the rocks.

The repeating rifles were gotten together, looked over carefully, and laid upon the rocks for ready use.

The revolvers too were placed at hand, and when all was in readiness the two comrades took another look at the horsemen.

"Indians, and Sioux of course."

"There are seventeen of them, I see, and, as well as I can see in the moonlight, several of them are white men, and that means that they are prisoners or renegades."

"If prisoners, we must not fire at random, but wait and see them camp, for they will build a fire and that will show where the prisoners are, if they are prisoners."

"I will be guided wholly by you, Surgeon Powell, so order and I obey," said Paul Paxton.

The band of horsemen now rode into the timber near the rocky hill and disappeared.

But soon after a light flashed up and a fire was kindled.

It was very evident that the Indians suspected no foes about.

Then the ponies were led out upon the grassy plot where the other horses had been, and staked out.

As the flames flared up brightly the Indians became excited, for they beheld the signs of the other campers there.

They saw the newly-made grave, the tracks of horses about, the camp-fire with ashes still warm, and every indication that the spot had been recently an encampment.

But they seemed to feel that the campers had been gone since the day before, and so went on with their preparations to camp there for the balance of the night.

The large grave seemed to puzzle them, and a number stood by it talking excitedly.

By the firelight the two friends in ambush

saw that four of the party were pale-faces and prisoners, for they were securely bound, and placed apart near the fire.

"Paxton."

"Yes, doctor."

"Two of those prisoners are soldiers, one an officer, the other a private, and the other two are in the garb of miners."

"If I am not mistaken, I knew the officer and one of the miners, but how they came to be prisoners I cannot understand."

"See, two red-skins are coming to this hill to reconnoiter, so now to give them a surprise."

"You take the one on the right, I'll drop the one on the left, and then turn your rifles at once upon the group of red-skins about the camp-fire, only be careful not to shoot toward the prisoners."

"All right, doctor, I am ready."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RESCUE.

THE Indian camp was about four hundred yards distant from the hill where the Surgeon Scout and Paul Paxton were in hiding.

There had been two camp-fires built, and they brightly illumined the dark timber where the moon's rays did not penetrate.

To one side were the four prisoners, and about the camp-fires were gathered all the red-skins save the two who had started toward the hill, and the one left to guard the horses.

The two Indians had gotten within a couple of hundred yards of the hill, when Frank Powell said:

"Mr. Paxton, we must rescue those prisoners."

"Can it be done?"

"Yes, by pluck and quick action."

"We will do it then."

"All right, we will drop those two gentlemen, then empty our repeating rifles into the group about the fire, and we should bring down others."

"Then, with a fresh rifle I will dash for the camp, firing as I run, and you follow with the other guns."

"We will stampede the Indians toward their horses, and while I keep up a running fire, you make for the prisoners, cut their bonds and arm them, and we can press on after the red-skins so hotly we can make them leave some of their horses."

"I am with you, doctor."

"All right."

"Now, ready, aim, fire!"

The two rifles flashed together, and the two red-skins dropped in their tracks.

With his wild war-cry echoing from the rocks, Surgeon Powell leaped down the hill, calling out:

"Now, men, follow me!"

Paul Paxton shouted a response, and gathering up the rifles did follow his leader, as soon as both had emptied a rifle apiece into the group of red-skins about the fire.

The Indians were taken completely by surprise, and, as the bullets whistled among them, dropping a third warrior, and wounding another, they made a dash for their ponies.

Several ran toward the prisoners, as though to force them along with them or kill them, and seeing this, Frank Powell and Paul Paxton halted and sent their bullets upon them.

This checked their desire for prisoners or revenge, and they sped like deer toward their ponies.

Frank Powell still followed, firing as he did so, while Paul Paxton with quickness and skill severed the bonds of one of the prisoners, and thrusting a knife into his hands cried:

"Cut the others loose, and I have weapons for you."

The released prisoner quickly freed one of his fellows, while Paul Paxton severed the bonds of the others, and seizing the rifles, they all, with wild cries, sped on after the daring Surgeon Scout who had so hotly pursued the Indians, firing then with his revolvers, that those who were escaping sought only to get away on their own ponies.

As the others came up they found that seven or eight of the horses still remained, while the Indians, their number lessened by three, and several of those escaping wounded, were seeking safety in rapid flight from the range of the deadly repeating rifles.

As they dashed out into the moonlight Frank Powell called out:

"Reload your weapons, then bring in the horses, and we have nothing to fear, unless there is another and larger band near."

"Frank Powell, by the gods of war!" cried the officer who had been rescued.

"Ay, ay, Percy Hammond, and glad I am to see you; but what are you doing here?" and the two friends clasped hands.

"Bearing dispatches from General Miles in New Mexico to Colonel Merrill."

"I had an escort of a scout and two soldiers, and coming upon three Indians with two white prisoners, sought to rescue them, did not hear the warning given me by this young man, and was led into an ambush."

"One of my men and the scout were killed, and we were made prisoners, but they did not get my dispatches, sewed into my coat, and most important."

"We owe you our lives, Surgeon Powell, for those red devils meant to roast and eat us, I verily believe; but you spoiled their feast, and are always doing just such good deeds."

Before Frank Powell could reply to the quickly-uttered words of handsome Lieutenant Percy Hammond, a voice said:

"And you have saved another friend, Doctor Powell, who wishes to thank you."

"Little Nugget! I half guessed it was you?"

"Yes, I started upon your trail, with Grizzly Jim here, and another miner, Mike Spence, and we ran upon a band of Indians."

"Mike was killed, our horses were shot, and we were made prisoners, and bravely striving to rescue us, the lieutenant and soldier shared our fate; but we have found you, or rather you have found us," said Little Nugget, holding out her hand and again grasping that of the Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER XXIV.

REINFORCED.

FRANK POWELL glanced over the country and saw the Indians afar off.

Not being pursued, they had come to a halt, and he said:

"That means that they have another band near."

"Yes, Powell, they have a band twice their own in numbers, and they parted to meet about here somewhere, sending us with the smaller party."

"Grizzly Jim speaks their language, however, and can tell you what they said."

"Yes, Pard Doctor, they has about thirty more in the other band, and when they parted it was to meet early in the morning at Rock Peak Spring, which is that pile o' rocks thar, out o' which you and yer pard come like a avengin' angel onter 'em."

"T'others will come up in a few hours, but I doesn't think we has much ter fear from 'em, now we has you along, and they thinks you is a dozen or two, from ther way they cut dirt; but it is well to be prepared for 'em."

"Yes, we can place a sentinel mounted, bring out all of our horses to feed here, and when the dawn comes, which will be soon, they will see our eleven animals added to their own and set us down as having a dozen men, soldiers, for I can rig up Little Nugget and you, Grizzly Jim, in uniforms, so as to show only soldiers."

"We have nothing to fear from them, I think, especially as we have an arsenal, have we not Mr. Paxton?" and then Surgeon Powell introduced his companion to Lieutenant Hammond, for he was known to Little Nugget and Grizzly Jim, the latter bluntly asking:

"Whar is yer pards, Gentleman Paul?"

That was the name by which Paxton was known in the mines, and he was a universal favorite in spite of it.

Paul Paxton looked uneasy, and made no reply, when Frank Powell quietly responded:

"I will answer for Mr. Paxton, Grizzly Jim."

"Though Mr. Paxton was the friend of the three comrades he left Bed Rock City with, he is now my friend, though I followed and killed them."

"Killed Dunston and his outfit?" cried Grizzly Jim in amazement.

"Yes, I had a quarrel with them which could only be settled by their life or mine."

"I found them camped here, we fought a triple duel, and they lie buried over yonder—you can see their graves from here."

"Wal, I be dog-goned!"

"I heerd them Injuns palaverin' over some new graves; but, doctor, you is a dandy and no mistake, only tell me what they was doin' while you got yer work in on them?"

"I will answer that they were trying their best to kill Surgeon Powell, even seeking to do so by treachery," said Paul Paxton.

"Only Doc were too sudden and sure for 'em?" said Grizzly Jim with deepest interest.

"Exactly."

"I was their second, and the duels were fought squarely and the result you know."

"Now let us see that we look to our own safety," Surgeon Powell said, and the party at once set to work to prepare against an attack from the Indians when reinforced, and to deceive them as to their number, when day dawned, by showing the other horses.

The horses left by the Indians happened to be those ridden by Lieutenant Hammond and his men, and Little Nugget and her comrades.

The other animals were brought down to the meadow-land and staked out slightly apart from the others, the soldier was placed on guard, and Little Nugget and Grizzly Jim soon drew over their clothing extra uniforms the Surgeon Scout had along, and a cap and hat was found for head covering.

A couple of dummy forms in uniform were then rigged up and seated among the rocks, so that when day broke the red-skins discovered, as they believed, three soldier sentinels in sight and eleven extra horses.

With the four prisoners secured from them this would make a force of fifteen men they counted, over one-third of their own, and that the Surgeon Scout whom they had long feared was one of the party, his well-known and wild ringing war-cry had told them.

They were several miles distant, in plain view of the whites, and with his glass, Surgeon Powell counted ten braves moving about, while three were lying down, evidently more or less severely wounded.

"We will be six to about forty, though we will appear to be fifteen, so they will be very cautious."

"Half of them left their rifles when they ran off, I see, and all their camp equipage, our saddles and bridles, so we are all right," Lieutenant Hammond said, as he came up among the rocks with the last load from the camp.

Several fires were built, the spring was near, and Grizzly Jim, a famous cook in the mining-camps, began to prepare breakfast.

It had just been disposed of when in the distance the other band of Indians came in sight, just twenty-seven in number.

CHAPTER XXV.

TO TAKE A LONE TRAIL.

WITH the soldier sentinel near the horses, and two "dummies" seated among the rocks, in plain view of the Indians, and weapons, including the recaptured ones of the lieutenant and his men, and Little Nugget and the two miners, all loaded and ready for use, Surgeon Powell, Paul Paxton and Percy Hammond sat down for a talk.

The surgeon explained his resignation, and what had happened since, asking the lieutenant to make his report to the colonel, and the young miner said that he would give him his written statement of the affair.

"Then, perhaps, you can recall your resignation, Powell?"

"No, Hammond, that has gone in and is irrevocable."

"I feel in my heart that I was justified in what I did, but it would not do for an army officer to take a trail of revenge, and so that ends it."

"But what will you do, where will you go?"

"I have several purposes in view, but nothing fully decided upon yet."

"I have a duty still I am anxious to perform, and then I will go perhaps to the mines somewhere to practice."

"There is big money at least in that," said the lieutenant, while Paul Paxton said:

"Yes, go in with me in a mining-claim as partner, and you can practice while I work the mine; but, it is lucky that the men out here are not such dead shots as you are, or you would have no practice."

"Do you know why Little Nugget came out here, lieutenant, you and Paxton?"

Both answered in the negative, and Frank Powell continued:

"I told you about her, Hammond, and that by her gambler husband's death, she was left a large fortune in mining interests."

"In looking over his papers she found much more than she anticipated, and at once she decided to take my trail, overtake me and ask me to become manager for her, offering me a very large share."

"She got Mike and Grizzly Jim to come along with her, and you know the result, and how close a call she had to death."

"But I told her, Paxton, that I could not accept the position, and suggested you, so you will get the offer from her, and if you don't fall in love with her I will be greatly surprised, for she is a very fascinating little woman."

"She is fascinating as a boy, that is certain," said Percy Hammond, while Paul Paxton remarked:

"I am willing to serve her and you, Doctor Powell, in any way in my power, while I will not be forgetful that I am also serving myself, and owe it to you, sir, that I am able to do so; but I sincerely hope that you can return to Bed Rock with us."

"That I cannot do, for I have, as I said, a certain scheme to carry out, one that I have long thought of, and which will be of value to the service, for it is not another trail of revenge, Paxton," and the Surgeon Scout smiled sadly.

Then, as though willing to change the subject he called out to Little Nugget to come and join them.

She no longer looked like the rough and ready youth that she had appeared in the mines where her sex was unknown.

Her face was not stained as then, and the discarding of her red wig revealed a wealth of golden curls clustering close to her head.

As before she did not wear clothes far too big for her, but, known as a woman, and yet clinging to her masculine attire as best suited to the mines, she had already fitted herself out at the store in Bed Rock City with a very fair suit, a gray slouch hat and top-boots.

About her slender waist was a belt of arms, a pair of revolvers and a bowie-knife, and slung at her back a repeating-rifle.

To appear to the Indians as a soldier she had slipped on a blue blouse with brass buttons and a military cap, and she came with upright carriage and graceful step at the call of the Surgeon Scout.

She certainly was a very handsome woman, yet looked like a mere girl, and, no longer assuming the airs of a rough young lad, she was graceful in her movements and refined in her manners.

"Well, Doctor Powell, can I do anything for you?" she said as she approached the group.

"Yes, you are to keep yourself out of fire, if we have a fight with the red-skins, Little Nugget, and see to the loading of our weapons, for one thing."

"This to a lad who killed his Indian in the fight yesterday?" she answered with a smile.

"Yes, for Little Nugget is a lad we do not intend shall be hurt."

"When we get rid of those Indians, you will return to Bed Rock City, Mr. Paxton going as your escort, and Lieutenant Hammond will accompany you that far and then branch off for Fort M—."

"And you, doctor?" she asked quietly.

"Will go my way also, as I told you was my intention; but you will find firm friends in the lieutenant and Mr. Paxton, and the latter will see to your affairs for you in Bed Rock City, for he has promised to do so."

"He is very kind, and he will not regret doing so; but are not the Indians moving this way?"

"Yes, your man is signaling, lieutenant, and it would be well to call him in with the horses."

"I will do so," and as the signal was given

ten red-skins made a sudden dash as though to capture the horses before they were driven up to the hill into shelter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

RED-SKIN STRATEGY.

THE Indians had played a cunning game under the very eyes of their white foes.

They had pretended to go into camp in view of the pale-faces, and had staked their ponies out, after the two bands were united.

One by one the ponies had been drawn beyond a ridge, until a score had disappeared, and upon these twenty bold braves had mounted, keeping out of sight, and by making a ride of several miles got around to a position not over a third of a mile from the spot where the horses of the party on the hill were feeding.

Here, under cover of a thicket they halted, rested their ponies, tightened their girths, looked to their arms and prepared to make a dash upon the horses of their pale-face enemies.

At the same time a move was being made upon the distant ridge by the rest of the band to attract the attention of the whites upon them, and they had started forward when discovered by Little Nugget.

When seen there was some excitement in the camp, but the calm voice of the Surgeon Scout was heard:

"Do not one of you show yourselves."

"Let us appear to be conscious of our strength, for your man knows what he is about, Hammond, and will get the horses in all right."

All eyes beheld the dash of the hidden band, so dangerously near, but the soldier sentinel knew his duty and did it quickly and well.

He rode from horse to horse, pulled up the stake-ropes, and, with the herd of horses all in lead, started at a gallop for the hill.

The Indians were not three hundred yards behind him, and they opened a hot fire, hoping to kill him, while their yells were answered by their comrades a mile away.

The bullets pattered about the soldier, and one horse was killed, another wounded, but he did not lose his head, but came on with the herd close at his heels.

Not a shot was fired from the hill, not a man was visible to the charging Indians, save the two dummies in uniform seated among the rocks, and slipping up behind these, old Grizzly Jim and Little Nugget moved them slightly, letting them appear to stand up and then resume their seats again.

The red-skins were surprised that they saw no one rushing about, received no shots from the hill.

They did not understand the silence, did not like it.

In among the rocks dashed the soldier and his horses, and within easy rifle-range came the red horsemen behind him.

"Run your horses to the corral, my man, then come and use your rifle," cried Surgeon Powell, and a moment after he called out:

"Now, all together, fire!"

Five repeating rifles flashed together, for Little Nugget also fired, and from the first shot the weapons rattled forth metal-like a large force firing.

The Indians did not see their foes, save the two supposed lookouts, who were not firing, and the quick firing appeared as though a dozen men were emptying their rifles, and they also discovered that they were being aimed at very surely, for down went several ponies, a warrior fell dead from his saddle, another put his horse about and clung hard to keep from falling, as he was badly wounded, and a third received a slight wound.

They drew rein quickly, wheeled as though on pivots, after emptying their rifles at the rocks, and sped back with all speed.

But death still dogged them, as a couple of well ponies fell, another warrior toppled from his saddle and others received slight wounds.

Before they were out of range they had a chance to see how far their foes could kill, and they did not halt until they met their comrades coming toward them.

"All of you aim at the group with sights raised for eight hundred yards, and let them see that they are nearer than we like them—fire!"

With the command of the Surgeon Scout

this time six rifles flashed together, for the soldier, having corralled the horses, had joined the doctor and the others.

The Indians were grouped together gesticulating wildly and with faces turned toward their foes.

They saw the puffs of smoke, and in chorus gave a yell of defiance.

But in a couple of seconds or so it turned into a wail, for even at that distance the rifles of the whites did deadly execution, a warrior being killed and a pony wounded.

Gathering up their dead and wounded again, they hastily retreated to their camp on the ridge.

"They will not charge again, but attempt to accomplish by cunning what they cannot do by force, and if we remain here, we may expect a visit from them at daybreak, a charge on foot and in full force," said the Surgeon Scout.

"Then we will have to watch for them all night," said Lieutenant Hammond.

"No, for we will not be here," answered Frank Powell.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PALE-FACE STRATEGY.

ALL were surprised at the words of Doctor Powell, that they would not be there, when the Indians again charged.

It told them that he had decided upon some plan, and Lieutenant Hammond said:

"Well, Powell, you are going to play pale-face strategy against Indian cunning?"

"About that, Hammond, for it is urgent that you push on to the fort, and there is no need of losing another day and night."

"Well, I am ready to be guided wholly by you."

"And yer won't go wrong, lieutenant, for Doc Powell kin out-Injun Injun six days in ther week, and give 'em a close call on Sunday too."

"Now awhile ago, but for him, we'd hev all run out ter drive ther critters in and thus showed our hand, showed how weak we was in numbers; but he managed it prime."

"Go ahead, Pard Doc, and say which way we is ter jump and we jumps your way, you bet," said Grizzly Jim, who had been trapper, Indian fighter, grizzly bear hunter and miner in the past twenty years of his life.

"I would suggest that we get the horses out of the corral one by one, as soon as we can, for we can do it without the Indians seeing us as long as they are in their present position."

"We can leave a man in charge of them, Grizzly Jim can cook us a supper of rations, and we can build up the fires as for our dinner, and show ourselves upon the rocks."

"Then, as soon as we have had dinner we can place our dummies on watch, for we will have to lose the uniforms, and picking out a couple of the worst of the horses, stake them out among the rocks where they can be seen."

"Then we can slip down the rear of the hill, mount and be off, keeping up a good speed until night."

"Once we have gotten around yonder range, you can lay your trail for Red Rock City, for Grizzly Jim knows the way, and I will turn off on the trail I am to take."

"Perhaps the Indians may make a feint at a charge before night, and meeting no resistance come right on! and in that case they will discover our retreat and capture the two horses and dummy soldiers; but we will at least have several hours' start, with night coming on, and so you can readily reach the mining-camps."

"And you?" asked Little Nugget.

"I will have a good as start as you, and they will not be able to catch me."

"Better go with us, Powell, and start out anew on your lone trail."

"No, Hammond, I will continue on now, after a ride of a few miles with you."

"What do you think of the plan?"

"It's jist prime, it be," said Grizzly Jim, earnestly, and the others agreed with him, for to remain there at night would be, doubtless, to have the red-skins entirely surrounding the hill the next morning, and that meant a siege of an indefinite time, even if they were able to stand their foes off.

Having decided to carry out the doctor's

plan of escape, Grizzly Jim set to work to cook provisions enough to prevent their having to build fires when they made halts for rest and food, and the others roamed about the rocks, in full view of the Indians, while the soldier and Surgeon Powell led the horses down the steep trail in the rear and staked them in a meadow half a mile away, where they could get plenty of grass.

Having placed the dummies so that they could be indistinctly seen, they all took up the haversacks of provisions and left the hill by the trail the horses had taken, stopping two of the worst of the lot in full view of the red-skins.

Leaving the dummy sentinels and deserted horses to their fate, the party went down to the meadow where their horses were, all saddled and ready for the trail.

The animals had had a good rest and plenty of grass and water, so could stand a hard ride, and mounting, the little band set off.

After going several miles, they came to where those returning to Red Rock City would have to branch off, and here Surgeon Powell halted and said:

"This is where I leave you."

"You will not go on, Powell?"

"No, Hammond, for I am well on my way toward my destination."

"Keep up a brisk pace, Grizzly Jim knows the way, and I would not make long halts until to-morrow, and then you are safe."

"The red-skins may not discover our flight until to-morrow, but then again they may, and it is best to be on the safe side."

"I wish you all a safe ride, and that some day we will meet again—good-by."

He had raised his hat in parting, but Little Nugget spurred up to his side and grasped his hand in farewell, and the others did the same.

Then they rode on their way, and looking back some time after saw him seated upon his horse, his pack-horse by his side, and complacently regarding him as though red-skins had no terror for him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON A MYSTERIOUS TRAIL.

"I BELIEVE I can do one good for the service and the border settlements, as I am going out of the army, and I shall make the attempt, if it costs me my life."

"Then the future is a blank to me."

"The past is wiped out, I have avenged my honor and the crimes against me, and I have done so after handing in my resignation, so that I brought no stain upon the service."

"My revenge came sooner than I had anticipated, but it is over, so let it rest now in the grave of forgetfulness."

"Now I turn my steps upon another mission."

So mused the Surgeon Scout as he sat upon his horse gazing after the retreating forms of those from he had just parted, Lieutenant Percy, Hammond, Paul Paxton, Little Nugget, Grizzly Jim and Markham the soldier.

They had gone on their trail to the fort, he was starting upon his mission, whatever it was, alone.

He had turned over to Paul Paxton Demon Dick's horses and gold, and kept for himself only his own two horses and outfit.

His horses were of the best, Rattler and Runaway, two of the fleetest animals on the border, possessing endurance and intelligence as well in a wonderful degree.

They were, either one of them, as good as a watch-dog, in guarding his camp, and perfectly trained they would not leave him if he did not stake them out even.

Whichever one he rode, the other acting as pack-horse would follow as obediently as a dog.

His outfit was of the best, for besides his uniforms he had a rough and-ready suit, a buckskin costume from moccasins to head-dress, a uniform coat, storm coat, rubber cloak and blankets, and the warmest of serapes.

He had a couple of good rifles and a shotgun, with two holster revolvers, a pair for his belt, knives, a hatchet, small saw, nails and a canvas fly for shelter, and cooking utensils with ammunition and provisions in plenty.

Thus equipped he was ready for a long trail and prepared for any danger.

In storm or cold he could make himself comfortable, and his horses had blanket-lined rubbers to protect them in severe weather, while he carried along his kit for shoeing them and had become an expert blacksmith.

A splendid hand with a lariat, Surgeon Powell, being a dead shot also, was a very dangerous foe to encounter.

His case of surgical instruments, medicine case, lint and all necessary for wounds and illness he had along as well, so that his pack-horse carried a load equal to his own saddled horse in bearing his weight.

A natural frontiersman he did not seem to dread the danger of being alone on the trail, and, having seen his late comrades ride out of sight, he turned abruptly to the left and went on his way at a slow walk, the pack-horse keeping close up behind.

After a ride of several miles he came to a ridge, on which arose a peak above the surrounding rises.

This range he ascended, and finding a good plot of grass about a mountain pond, halted there and went on foot to the summit of the peak.

It was covered with cedars, and pressing through them the doctor soon picked out the locality of their late camp.

He turned his glass upon it, and after awhile discovered the horses which they had left there.

They were still feeding at the length of their ropes.

After a while he was able to pick out one of the dummy sentinels, still on his post.

"The Indians have not yet moved, and the party are all of twelve miles ahead of them, so are safe," he murmured.

Sweeping the further country beyond he beheld the ponies of the red-skins staked out there, as they had last seen them, and he could see the forms of the warriors moving about, some of them grouped together, and doubtless they were around the wounded braves.

He was about to close his glass when his quick eye detected moving forms a mile to one side of the hill.

They were Indian braves, and they had crawled across the open space and were creeping around to flank the camp of the pale-faces.

Watching their progress, and the land over which they would have to go, for his position commanded a splendid view, he saw that it would take them an hour to yet reach a point where they could creep up on one side to within several hundred yards of the hill.

Unseen from that point they could make a dash upon the camp, and with chances of reaching the goal, even were it to be well defended.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

THE Surgeon Scout regarded the Indians on the war-path most attentively.

Then he counted them as they all passed into view before him.

Again turning his glass upon their distant camp he also counted the ponies there and the forms of the braves that he could.

"There are just forty-one in that expedition, and their chief is leading them."

"The balance, with the wounded and their ponies, are left in camp to cast off suspicion."

"They will reach that thicket near the hill about an hour before sunset, and then will wait until the shadows fall and crawl up and make a dash."

"They think the camp numbers about ten or a dozen men, and they have brought four to one against them, and depend upon a surprise, feeling sure that they are supposed to be still in their encampment over yonder on the hill."

"When they find that only two dummies and a couple of horses await their coming, they will swear in the choicest Indian profanity, which means yells of rage."

"I wish I could be near enough to see them."

"Of course they will have to get their ponies and wounded up before they decide upon anything, and the trail cannot be

taken until morning, and following it for a short while will show them that their foes have escaped them and they will give it up.

"As my trail winds toward their country they will doubtless all follow it, hoping for a couple of scalps.

"But I don't think they will get mine, for I, too, by the time they start on my trail will have some forty miles start, and that is a long distance, especially for a man who knows how to cover up his tracks."

Thus musing the doctor waited until he saw the forty-one red-skins get into position near the hill, and muttered:

"If they went a quarter of a mile further around to the rear they would discover the trail and at once know that they have been duped.

"Red-skins are cunning, yet they can be readily deceived, for those burning camp-fires, dummy forms and horses completely deceive them.

"It is a little over an hour to sunset, so I will continue on, for I am not yet many miles from them."

Returning to his horses he mounted, crossed the range and rode on his way at a pace that put ten miles to the hour behind him.

He kept this up until the moon was an hour high and then went into camp on the banks of a shallow, pebbly-bottomed stream.

It was after six hours' rest that he was again in the saddle and turning up the stream.

Keeping in the water, he said:

"This will delay them, as they will have to go both ways to see which way I have gone.

"Perhaps, when daylight comes, I can find a place to go out, where my horses will leave no trail."

It was a ride of five miles in the stream before dawn came, and then he beheld a rocky shore, which, by being without a load, his horses could scramble up.

Riding up to the bank, he dismounted and took off his saddle and pack.

From the latter he took some leather hoof-mufflers, and pulling off his boots he stepped into the stream and buckled them upon the feet of his horses.

Then he spread his canvas fly down to the water's edge and led one and then the other horse up the rocky and steep bank to where the soil would not even be impressed by an iron hoof.

But resaddling the animals, he held on with them still wearing the mufflers for a mile or more, when he came to a trail leading up and along a ridge.

Here the mufflers were removed and Frank Powell went up the deer-trail to the summit of the ridge and held along it for a couple of hours when he went into camp and had a cold breakfast, for he did not dare build a fire.

His horses had a good rest and feed, and he took an hour's nap, before he saddled up again to start on his way.

He was just about to mount when his glance fell upon two riders coming directly toward the ridge.

One was an Indian chief, the other a red-skin girl, wearing the head-dress of a chief's daughter.

Another glance showed him that there was a pursuer on their track.

Glancing far back over the trail he noticed a party of Indian horsemen.

"It is a runaway, and the girl is an unwilling participant, for she is bound.

"That is a chief with her, as his war bonnet denotes, and it is a chief on their track, and he has outridden his braves several miles.

"Shall I rescue the girl, or keep in hiding, is the question."

As he watched the flight and pursuit, Doctor Powell saw that the chief with his captive, feeling that he could not escape with her, meant to try another plan to keep his rival at bay.

As he halted at the base of the ridge with the girl, Frank Powell saw all that occurred, and in an instant had made up his mind to act.

Seeing that the pursuing chief was hard hit, yet pressed on, and that the fugitive red-skin intended to kill the young girl, he quickly raised his rifle and shattered the hand that grasped the descending knife.

As this did not check the chief's revenge, he sent another shot to kill, and then boldly ran down the ridge and confronted the girl and her wounded lover, as has been made known in the opening chapters of my story.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PALE-FACE SAMARITAN.

"I'm in for it now, and must face the music.

"Still, I could not have asked for a better chance to carry out my mission, than this that got me into the Indian country."

So mused Doctor Powell, as it was decided that he should go with the War Eagle and his braves to the village of the Sioux.

The body of the dead chief Killer, with the scalp torn off, was disgraced and was left as food for the coyotes.

Then Surgeon Powell set to work to rig a *travois* on which to carry the wounded young chief, War Eagle.

He took his hatchet from his pack and selecting the saplings himself, cut and trimmed them.

Then, with lariats he made a harness for the pony that was to draw the *travois*, and next rigged his canvas fly like a hammock between them and made it soft and springy.

Then the wounded chief was lifted tenderly upon the blankets spread upon his bed, and placing a careful Indian brave at the pony's head to lead him, he sent others ahead on foot to pick out all the rocks and obstructions on the trail that would give a rude jolt to the ends of the long and springy shafts.

Slowly the party then started upon the homeward march, the Surgeon Scout walking by the *travois* himself for a mile or two, and feeling the pulse of the wounded chief to see how he was bearing the ordeal.

Red Bird and the Indian braves watched him as though they believed him to be some superhuman being, and were awed and impressed by him.

Here was their bitterest foe, one whom they had dreaded in battle, and whose scalp they had longed for, aiding their young chief with a skill far beyond their medicine-men.

He was trying to bring back from the very verge of the grave his foe, after having saved the life of their idol, Red Bird, and slain the terrible chief the Killer.

Their foe, yet he was their friend.

They had watched his making of the *travois* so carefully, noted his desire to have obstacles removed from the trail, and to have a cautious brave to lead the pony, and that at first he had walked along by the side of the chief.

While the sun was yet above the horizon he called a halt, for he did not care to have the chief unprotected in the night air, or to subject him to too long a trip.

He was careful in spreading his canvas fly for him, cutting brush to keep off the wind at the back, and from his own provisions he cooked something for the chief to eat.

Just as the camp became settled there was some excitement among the braves.

It was soon announced that a party of hunters were coming in, and one glance at them showed the Surgeon Scout that they were his late enemies, the captors of Lieutenant Hammond, Little Nugget and those with them.

He knew then that they had discovered the flight of their foes, that the trails had shown them that they had had too long a start to pursue them, and so they had pushed for their village, sending only a few warriors on the trail he had taken.

He heard the chief of the band tell his story about the camp-fire, of how they had ambushed three miners, killing one and capturing two, and later had killed a soldier and captured two others who sought to rescue them.

They had the scalp of the miner and soldier with them.

Then came the story of the camp at the base of the hill, the rescue of their prisoners by the "Big Medicine Pale-face," whose war-cry they knew so well, and all that had followed, up to their rush upon the deserted camp to find only the dummies and the two horses.

Surgeon Powell sat by the side of War

Eagle the wounded chief, listening to all, and smiling at their fury.

When they told how they had sent seven braves on the trail of the two horses, he laughed lightly, especially when they were told that the one they were pursuing was then in their camp, had saved the life of the Red Bird, and was doing all in his power to save their loved young chief.

Then the Surgeon Scout arose and boldly walked to the camp-fire.

His late adversaries gazed upon him in wonder at his boldness, while he said:

"My red brothers here were my foes awhile since, but we are friends now.

"They have with them wounded braves, and you know me as the Big Medicine Chief, so let me do what I can for them.

"Bring your wounded brothers to the light of the camp-fire and I will help them."

"It is the order of the War Eagle that his braves obey his white brother, the mighty medicine-man of the pale-faces," said Red Bird coming up to the fire.

More brush was thrown on the fire then to make a better light, the surgeon got his surgical and medicine-case, and asking Red Bird to aid him, was ready for his work.

There were in all six wounded braves, three of them only light flesh wounds.

The most serious was a shattered arm at the elbow, then a shot in the neck and the third a bullet in the thigh.

The braves looked on in silence, while the flesh wounds were quickly dressed and disposed of, then the bullet extracted from the neck of the brave, next the ball taken from the hip and these carefully cared for and told to rest.

The Surgeon Scout then turned to the worst wound of all, the shattered left arm, and said to the stoical brave:

"My red brother is a great brave, he has received a bad wound in battle, but he wears at his belt the scalp of a pale-face soldier—it will soothe his pain.

"He will become a chief and be known as the One Arm, for I must take the arm off, or he will die."

All listened in silence and the brave did not flinch.

He knew that the bone was in atoms and said:

"The Big Medicine knows."

Binding up the arm, and with Red Bird as his deft assistant, Surgeon Powell quickly and skillfully did the work, the Indian not uttering a groan.

When it was over with, and he had taken a dose of medicine given him, he held out his remaining hand and said:

"One Arm the red brother of Big Medicine."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GUEST OF THE SIOUX.

THE great care and gentleness of the Surgeon Scout in his dressing the wounds of the braves, and in all that he did to avoid giving pain and relieve suffering, was noticed by one and all of the braves gathered about the fire.

Their chief was sleeping peacefully, the wounded who had been cared for were also resting, and the brave who had lost his arm, under the influence of an opiate to deaden pain, was slumbering, though had he been awake and suffering he would have uttered no moan of pain, for it is the Indian nature to suffer in silence the greatest agony.

Red Bird had retired to the wicky-up made for her, and at last the Surgeon Scout's labors being over he got out his pipe and tobacco, and sat down for a smoke to solace himself.

He passed around his tobacco-pouch, and filling their pipes the painted, stern-faced braves sat about the fire smoking with him and casting curious, though sly glances at the man who had so long been a terror to them.

Having finished his pipe Frank Powell arose, said a few friendly words, took a look at the chief and other wounded, and then, spreading his blankets lay down to rest.

If he felt any dread, any anxiety, he did not show it by look or action, but slumbered peacefully until morning.

The chief in charge then, the one who had had the brush with Surgeon Powell at the hill camp, sent a brave on ahead to notify

the village that War Eagle and others were wounded, and were being brought in, along with the great white medicine-man of the pale-faces.

The chief seemed rested and better, and the one-armed warrior also was in good spirits, while the rest of the wounded were doing well.

Carefully went Frank Powell on the rounds, and aided again by Red Bird, dressed the wounds afresh, and then rigged up a second *travois*, for the one-armed brave, who he did not think should go through the fatigue of a long ride on horseback.

He fed the wounded from his stores, and then the march was begun again at a steady, but slow pace.

Two halts were made during the day, when once, at a large stream, the doctor had the braves raise the *travois* on their shoulders and wade across, thus saving the wounded from a ducking, for the water was waist deep.

It was nearly sunset when the band wound through a narrow canyon and came out into a valley overhung by lofty mountains upon all sides.

It was a large valley, a mile in width, and several miles long, with fine meadow-lands for the ponies, and a large stream winding through it, but a shallow one that could be readily forded here and there.

Upon both banks of this stream, which was fringed with timber, were located the tepees of the Indians, and a glance showed the experienced eyes of the Surgeon Scout that from the number of lodges visible, there must be nearly, if not quite, five thousand red-skins dwelling there.

Near the center, and back near the base of a high cliff, was the large Council Lodge of the tribe, standing off to itself, while opposite and across the stream, also sheltered by a high cliff, was the big Medicine Lodge, all painted over with strange devices.

Then nearest tepee to the Council Lodge was a large one, where dwelt the young head chief War Eagle, and from his house he could look across the valley and behold the spacious tepees that marked the home of the old medicine chief Death Fighter and his daughter Red Bird.

There were other prominent tepees where sub-chiefs and medicine-men dwelt, but upon the houses of War Eagle and Death Fighter the greatest interest centered.

There was one tepee, too, that must not be forgotten, and that was upon the other side of the Council Lodge from that of the War Eagle.

That was the late home of the Cheyenne chief, the Killer, who, failing to win the heart of the Red Bird, had boldly led her into a trap and kidnapped her.

Now about that tepee walked several Sioux braves, guarding it until the return of the War Eagle, and corralled near was the large herd of ponies that had belonged to the renegade chief, who, received as a brother into the Sioux tribe, had proven to be a traitor to those who had befriended him.

As the returning warriors filed through the canyon into the valley, the whole village was seen to be astir.

There was a loud beating of Indian musical instruments, songs of condolence and wild, weird war songs.

Braves, mounted upon their best ponies gayly caparisoned, and with their faces painted all the hues of the rainbow, were in line to receive the chief, while women and children shouted and sung with savage earnestness.

The Surgeon Scout rode just behind the braves of the War Eagle, and his keen eyes took in the whole situation.

Alone, he was riding into the midst of foes.

The Red Bird had ridden to his side, as though to be ready to shield him from harm, while she said to assure him:

"Let the Great Medicine Chief remember that he is welcome to the village of my people, who were his foes, but are now his friends."

CHAPTER XXXII.

BACK TO BED ROCK.

WHEN the homeward-bound party so to call them, left Surgeon Frank Powell on their way to Bed Rock City, there was not one that did not feel a misgiving at heart regard-

ing the lone and mysterious trail the brave man had started upon.

Lieutenant Percy Hammond had known Doctor Powell for a long while and had always admired his courage and dash.

"There is a man," he said as he rode along with Paul Paxton, with Little Nugget just in front of them, Grizzly Jim ahead as guide and the soldier, Reuben Rexford, bringing up the rear behind the pack and loose horses they were driving along.

"There is a man," repeated Lieutenant Hammond, "who is a wonder to all who know him."

"He is as brave as any man I ever saw, and is one of the deadliest men in a fight forced upon him, and a terror in battle, yet he has the nature of a child and the heart of a woman."

"His hand is ever ready to aid a friend, and a foe in distress commands at once his sympathy."

"Though a surgeon of superior skill, he loves to be in the field with the fighters, and goes to the front in every battle, looking after the wounded when the fight is over."

"Now it was through him we are not now prisoners to the Indians, or dead, and he has now gone off on some mysterious trail that may cost him his life."

"I agree with you, lieutenant, in all that you say of Doctor Powell."

"Those who were my friends, his foes, spoke of him in terms of the highest praise, and yet they knew that when they met him it would be for life or death."

"I became his friend when I saw how he behaved toward them, and ever will I remain so."

"As for his going off on this trail alone, any other man might do so and that be the end of it; but somehow I do not feel that Frank Powell was born to die at the hands of a red-skin, and I shall confidently expect him to reappear soon," said Paxton.

"And so do I," remarked Little Nugget.

"He is a man who seems capable of taking care of himself under any and all circumstances, and though he takes desperate chances he yet seems to weigh them well every time."

"I saw him in his duel with Gambler Bolton, you told me of his triple duel with those three miner pards out here, we all saw his rescue of us, with your aid, Mr. Paxton, from the Indians, and afterward how he plotted and outgeneraled them, so I have little dread of his not being able to take care of himself, and by following his directions we will doubtless reach Bed Rock City in safety."

Thus talking, with the Surgeon Scout the theme generally of conversation, they pushed rapidly on, for Grizzly Jim was obeying the orders given him and wished to put all the space he could between the Indians and themselves before nightfall.

Just at nightfall a halt was made for a couple of hours for supper and rest, and then the party mounted and continued their ride once more, the moon having risen to light their way.

Before dawn another halt was made for several hours, and all had a sleep that was refreshing, and afterward a good breakfast.

A good feed of grass, water, and the rest also refreshed the horses so that they went along at a brisk pace once more, but were soon made to go more slowly by Grizzly Jim, who was now assured that the Indians could not overtake them, and more, they would not pursue them nearer toward Bed Rock City unless they were in very large force.

So the pace was then a slow one during the day, yet fast enough to bring them into Bed Rock City by sunset.

The miners leaving their work, as the shadows lengthened, and going to Bed Rock City, or their cabins, greeted them as they passed along the trails, and when she came near her own cabin, Little Nugget said:

"I turn off here to my home, but I will be glad to see you, lieutenant, if you make any stay in Bed Rock, or pass through again. I live at the cabin of my late husband, Gambler Bolton."

"You, Mr. Paxton, will please return to your old quarters, the cabin of the Gentleman Miner, as they called you and your comrades, and let it continue to be your home while here."

"I have the key of the cabin and will give it to you."

"Thank you, Mrs.—"

"Pardon me, but I am Little Nugget only here in the mines—I am deserving of no other name while I dress as a man, and the name of Bolton I do not like."

"I was going to say, Little Nugget, that I would go on to the tavern to-night with Lieutenant Hammond, and to-morrow return to my old home with your permission."

"As you please, sir," and Little Nugget shook hands with the lieutenant, bowed to Paul Paxton with the remark that she would see him again, and with a word of farewell to Rexford, the soldier, rode on to her cabin, accompanied by Grizzly Jim, whom she asked to accompany her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

AT the hotel the lieutenant and Paul Paxton soon found quarters for the night and a good supper.

The news soon spread of Paul Paxton's return, and that there was an army officer a guest at the hotel, and crowds collected to hear the news, for that Little Nugget had returned also spread about.

Grizzly Jim had told how they had run into an ambush and Mike, the miner, had been killed while an attempted rescue by Lieutenant Hammond had ended in that officer's capture and one of his soldiers slain.

Then he told of the rescue by Surgeon Powell, and of the triple duel he had heard of, along with Demon Dick having been killed by the man he sought to slay.

Like wild-fire the news spread through the camps, and that night the saloons were crowded to their utmost capacity talking over the matter.

Several threats were made by the friends of Demon Dick against Doctor Powell, and it was hinted by these men that Demon Dick had never been killed in fair combat.

But as Demon Dick had been caught robbing Gambler Bolton's house, and his character as a desperado was well known, few took any stock in the reports against Surgeon Powell.

Again others said that the three men shot by the Surgeon Scout in a duel ought to be avenged, but Paul Paxton at once revealed himself at their reports being told him, and gave out very decidedly that he had been the second in the triple duel, that he was responsible to any one who wished to slander the Surgeon Scout behind his back, and he would not hear him spoken against by any one.

Paul Paxton was well known in the mines as a dangerous man to arouse although he had been first regarded as a "tenderfoot" and a "gentleman," and the tough element talked less loud when they saw the stand that he took when Surgeon Powell was defamed.

Lighting his pipe, before going to bed, Lieutenant Percy Hammond decided to take a stroll in the moonlight, but, tempted by a mossy bank at the base of a large tree he threw himself down upon it to regard the scene before him.

Seated upon the bank, his back against the tree, he gazed out upon the moonlit valleys and mountains, the lights in the cabins of the miners sparkling like fireflies.

Tired with his long journey he ceased to send clouds of smoke upward, his pipe went out and he dropped off into a doze, when suddenly voices awoke him.

He was about to reveal himself by getting up and returning to the hotel, when he heard words that caused him to remain just as he was and listen.

There were three men near him, for they had halted in the trail that ran a dozen feet beyond the tree down into the valley.

They could not see him, nor did he see them, but heard them.

What he heard was as follows:

"I tell you, pards, ther gal's comin' back must not prevent our carryin' out our plan, for I got inter ther cabin by the chimney last night and knows jist whar Bolton kept his gold, and what she had has been put thar too."

"We must git it to-night, or not at all."

"I is in for it too, as you says, pard."

"Waal, I'm with yer, but I has a recommend ter make thet will git us more money."

"What be that?"

"I moves we takes the gal along, and sells her back to ther miners for a big bag of gold, for it kin be did."

"How'll we git her?"

"Go thar and play we is Grizzly Jim, and she'll open ther door, and in we goes."

"We can gag and tie her, git ther dust, and light out, and you bet none of 'em kin find us in ther hidin'-place I takes yer to."

"I'm willin', pard."

"Me too; but it must be done right away?"

"Yas, to night, so you go, Nick, and git ther horses ready and ther pack animals, and I'll drop in at ther store and make some extra purchases, seein' as we'll have ther gal along, while you, Sol, jist come along with me and help me carry ther things down to whar ther horses is."

"In a hour, Nick, me and Sol will be with yer at ther gal's cabin, and then we'll push right out down the hill from thar, and it won't be known she's kidnapped until late ter-morrer, you bet, and then we'll be beyond pursuin'."

There were a few more words said, and then the three men walked away back to the hotel, from the course they took.

Lieutenant Hammond was wide awake now, and he smiled grimly as he muttered:

"Nick, Sol, and the name of the third was not named."

"I'll look for Paxton now, for there is work for us to do," and he made his way by a flank movement to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A UNANIMOUS JURY.

"An, lieutenant, I thought you had retired," called out Paul Paxton, as he met the officer at the door of the hotel.

"No, I've been out for a walk, and I've struck it rich, as you miners say."

"Indeed!"

"Prospecting at at night, eh?"

"Well, in a quiet way; but who are Sol and Nick, miners?"

"I know two men of that name, and a third is known as Rocks, and a worse trio does not live in the mines."

"Those are just the men, I think, in fact feel sure."

"They are desperadoes are they?"

"Yes, and all else that is mean."

"They were some of Gambler Bolton's heelers, and are to be feared."

"Well, come with me while I find Rexford, for there is a little work for us to do, as of course you do not mind going with me?"

"Command me, lieutenant, in all that I can aid you."

"Are there any women in the mines?"

"Never heard of but one, Little Nugget."

"Well, she is in danger of being kidnapped, and by that Satan's trio whom you named."

"I cannot explain more now, but we will find Rexford and go at once."

But the soldier was not in his room, and could not be found, so the two went together, making their way by an unfrequented trail around to Little Nugget's cabin and which Paul Paxton knew well.

A light burned in the cabin, and in answer to a knock Little Nugget called out:

"Well, who is it?"

"Lieutenant Hammond and Paxton," said the latter, in a low tone.

The door was at once opened, and in a few words the officer told the woman just what he had overheard.

She did not change color at the danger that threatened her, but said:

"It was very kind of you to come so quickly to my cabin to prevent this attack on me, gentlemen."

"But we do not wish to prevent it, only to go hiding and let them make the attempt to kidnap you."

"We wish to hold them up, and when we have made them prisoners, turn them over to the miners to try," said Paul Paxton.

"Will not Judge Lynch be the judge, jury and executioner then, Mr. Paxton?"

"If he is, in the guise of a hundred miners, then Bed Rock City will have reason to rejoice over the loss of three of its citizens."

"But we must go into hiding now."

They stepped quickly into another room, and none too soon, for in five minutes a rap came at the door, and hoof-falls were heard outside, as horses came near the cabin.

"Who is there?" asked Little Nugget, in the calmest kind of voice.

"Old Grizzly Jim, and I has news for yer."

She opened the door, for the voice had been well imitated, and quickly into the cabin stepped three men, a trio of very tough looking citizens.

They closed the door behind them, and, quick as a flash one grasped Little Nugget in his arms and held his hand over her mouth, while a second threw a lariat about her to pinion her arms.

But suddenly came the stern command:

"Hands up, all of you!"

Cries of fright and amazement broke from the lips of the trio, but they beheld the officer and Paul Paxton covering them, and two of them obeyed.

But Rocks hastily drew his revolver, though never to use it, as a bullet pierced his brain, fired by the steady hand of Paul Paxton, who said drily:

"Do you wish to take the same trail, Sol, you and Nick?"

"Nary, I hain't no fool."

Little Nugget had not flinched at the shot that killed Rocks, and now quickly unbuckled the belt of Sol and disarmed him, while Lieutenant Hammond did a like service for Nick.

"Now, lieutenant, if you will go up to the hotel and tell the landlord to come here and take these prisoners in charge, for he is the judge of Bed Rock City camps, I will join you as soon as I get them in safer hands than mine," said Paul Paxton.

"I will see you before you go to-morrow," said Little Nugget, following him to the door.

"Oh, yes, I'll ride by on my way out of the camps," and ten minutes after Lieutenant Hammond had informed "Judge" Jessop, the landlord of the Gilt Edge Inn, that he had heard the plot of three men to kidnap Little Nugget and rob her cabin, and that he would find them at the cabin in the charge of Paul Paxton.

The landlord at once hastened away from the officer, who retired to his room, and was just dropping off to sleep when Paul Paxton entered.

"Well, Paxton, I suppose those fellows will be tried to-morrow, and I may have to remain half a day as a witness."

"Oh, no, they have already been tried, found guilty and executed."

"The deuce you say! that was quick work even for the border."

"They were caught in their crime; Judge Jessop came down with the whole camps at his heels, heard my story and Little Nugget's, had already heard yours, so they were unanimously decided guilty by a jury of several hundred men and at once hanged—that is the end of it," said Paul Paxton, who had become accustomed to wild border scenes.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TO ATONE FOR THE PAST.

LIEUTENANT PERCY HAMMOND gave a low whistle at the report of Paul Paxton of the quick retribution that had overtaken the kidnappers.

As an army officer he was glad that he had not been called upon to witness the mob law and mock trial of the desperadoes, and yet, after a moment's thought he could not but say:

"Well, Paxton, it is certainly about the best that could have been done."

"About half the juries in trying a case are swayed by the lawyer who is the best talker, and the innocent frequently are punished and the guilty escape."

"Now I do not believe in capital punishment, for so often it is a mockery, and again a scene that would disgrace barbarians."

"But those men were guilty, for though I did not see them, I heard them, and the names of two of them."

"Rocks, you killed in self defense, and the other two, being caught in their guilt, were proven so and hanged, and Judge Lynch makes fewer mistakes than the judges who sit on the bench through long and wearisome trials."

"But I will quit moralizing, and ask about that plucky little woman?"

"Oh, Little Nugget told her story, and when the jury said, in several hundred voices, to Judge Jessop's question as to their guilt or innocence."

"Guilty!"

"She glanced at the men and said:

"I forgive you and feel sorry for you, for I guess the boys will hang you."

"And the boys did?"

"Within ten minutes, though Little Nugget declined the honor of having them hanged on the big tree by the cabin, so they took them to a place some distance off and strung them up."

"I remained a few minutes with Little Nugget, and when I came on up to the hotel found that the crowd had done their work and were celebrating the event by getting full," and Paul Paxton turned into the other room and was soon fast asleep.

It was early when they arose the next morning, and hunting up Rexford the lieutenant told him to be ready to start soon after breakfast, and then the two friends breakfasted together until the "judge" joined them and asked Lieutenant Hammond to say to Colonel Merrill that matters would jog along all right in Bed Rock City as long as he was the one to see that justice was properly administered.

Soon after Rexford came up with the horses, and mounting his own horse Paul Paxton rode away with the lieutenant to see him some miles on his trail.

They passed the three swinging forms of the kidnappers as they rode along, for Rocks had also been hanged though dead, and they were to be left there as a warning to evil-doers until evening, when they would be buried.

Little Nugget was at her cabin and welcomed them as they rode up.

She had arisen early, made some purchases at the store, and begged Lieutenant Hammond to accept them, as they would add to his comfort on his way, and he did so.

As she saw that Paul Paxton was going a short distance on the trail with the officer, she asked also to go along, and mounting her horse they rode off together, and further down the valley they were to be joined by Grizzly Jim, who had been engaged as guide by Lieutenant Hammond, for his guide had been the one who was killed in the attack of the red-skins.

Grizzly Jim was mounted upon his best horse, and the lieutenant had exchanged the animals he had ridden for fresh ones, trading with Judge Jessop, who had given him fine animals for the long ride.

But Grizzly Jim had had in lead two other animals, which, seeing Little Nugget along he said:

"Is you goin' ter talk, Leetle Nugget, or must I tell it?"

"I'll do it—it is, lieutenant, that I told Grizzly Jim last night to take these two horses home with him, and to give one to you, the other to Soldier Rexford, from me."

"They are two of the finest animals Gambler Bolton had, and that is saying a great deal, and it will be well to have them along in case of accidents, and I wish you both to accept them from me, for you have been so kind to me."

"I will speak for myself, Little Nugget, and say that I accept with pleasure, and I know that Rexford will also, though we do not need the horses to remember Little Nugget by."

"No, indeed, sir, we won't forget her soon, and I thank you, miss, for your present to me," said Reuben Rexford, whose face showed his pleasure at the gift.

After going several miles with them on the trail, Little Nugget halted to say good-by, and soon after she and Paul Paxton were on the back track, while the lieutenant, Rexford and Grizzly Jim rode on, thoroughly well equipped for their long journey.

On the way back Little Nugget arranged with Paul Paxton to take charge of her affairs, telling him frankly that the papers of Buck Bolton showed that he had a great

many varied interests in the mines which she could not attend to alone, and which she wished settled up, as it was not her intention to remain on the border longer than was necessary.

"I regard this life as a sinful one, though, impelled by a feeling of hatred against the man I once loved, and who should have protected me not clouded my life, I thought nothing of what I had to pass through to accomplish my purpose.

"Now it is different, for he is dead, and I detest this wild existence, this life of an outcast, and long to leave it forever, forgetting that I ever lived it, if that is possible.

"But for what I have suffered in the past, I have a right to hope for comfort and release in the future, and Bolton has left riches which I alone have the right to claim, and thus I will be enabled to enjoy doing good in the world with my wealth, and atone for what I may have done wrong in the past, in seeking revenge for the injuries done me," and she spoke with deepest feeling, as though fully realizing the bold step she had taken.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MAD MARAUDER.

THE three horsemen, with their two pack-animals well laden, through the kindness of Little Nugget and Paul Paxton, and their three led horses, traveled along on their first day out of Bed Rock City at a very fair pace, for Lieutenant Hammond had already been delayed days beyond the time he had hoped to reach Fort M—.

"I am about four days behind time, Grizzly Jim, and as our horses are fresh, and we have enough to change about on, thanks to Little Nugget's generosity, we must push ahead as fast as we can, for you can rest as long as you please at the fort."

"I'll take the pace yer wish, loot'nant, and git yer thar on time," was the answer.

They camped for an hour at noon, and just before sunset for the night, so as to be able to find a good camping-place and get comfortable by dark.

Retiring early to their blankets, two hours before daybreak they were in the saddle and held on until the sun was well up before halting for breakfast.

Grizzly Jim was a good guide.

He knew where the best water and grass were to be found, and looked well to the comfort of the horses.

He also knew the shortest cuts across country, and kept a bright lookout for Indians.

The supplies furnished by Little Nugget and Paul Paxton enabled them to live well, and game was plentiful along the trail.

They halted at noon the second day, on the slope of a hill where there was a large, free-flowing spring.

While Rexford gathered wood and Grizzly Jim set about cooking dinner, Lieutenant Hammond strolled to a point where he could obtain a fine view of the valley.

He had hardly cast his eyes over it when he saw two horsemen dash out of a thicket at full speed, leading a couple of pack-horses with them.

They seemed to be flying from some danger, and were coming toward the point where he then stood.

A quick call brought Grizzly Jim and Rexford with their rifles to his side, and as he pointed to the horsemen, all of a mile away, a third horseman dashed out of the thicket upon the trail of the others.

This horseman was a most striking looking individual, indeed, and at sight of him Grizzly Jim called out in a voice that seemed to quiver with fear:

"Oh, Lordy! it's ther Mad Marauder, lieutenant!"

The horseman in question was a giant in size, compared with the other men upon whose trail he was, and his horse was a very large, very long-bodied animal, with neither saddle nor bridle, and snow-white.

He ran at a speed that was terrific and hastily overhauled those before him.

But the rider?

He rode without saddle, grasped the mane of his horse as his only bridle, and carried a broad-bladed knife over two feet in length.

He was dressed in the skins of wild animals, moccasins, and had a scarf tied

about his head, the ends fluttering wildly as he rode along at full speed.

About his waist was a leather belt and upon each hip was a revolver.

His hair and beard were long, unkempt and gray, and his whole face was one of fierceness, while his eyes were as savage as a brute's.

Such was the man that Lieutenant Hammond regarded closely through his glass, his gaze seeming to be riveted upon him, until suddenly he cried:

"He means to attack those two men.

"Come! we must go to their rescue!"

"No, no, Pard loot'nent, it's bad luck to turn rifle or weapon on that man—it's ther Mad Marauder of ther Mines," cried Grizzly Jim, anxiously.

"All right, Jim, you stay here, but I will go," said the officer, starting at a run for where his horses were staked out.

"And I will follow you, sir," cried Rexford.

"No, no, yer don't go alone, if go yer does, for Grizzly Jim are with yer," and the miner-guide dashed on after the lieutenant and the soldier.

Their horses were soon reached, saddled, and the three dashed out of the thicket.

But a strange sight met their gaze, for the two fugitive horsemen had been brought to a halt by the Mad Marauder, and they had heard several shots.

But there on his splendid horse sat the wild man, while on the ground lay the two men he had pursued.

"My God! he has killed them both!"

"Come! we must kill or capture him!" cried the lieutenant.

His words reached the ears of the horseman, he beheld the uniforms, and wheeling his horse the Mad Marauder of the Mines dashed away with a wild yell that was terrible to hear.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A MAN OF ILL OMEN.

LIEUTENANT PERCY HAMMOND was mounted upon the horse given him by Little Nugget, and which Grizzly Jim had told him was about the fleetest animal in the mines.

He put spurs to the horse as he saw the Mad Marauder wheel and dash away, but it did not take him long to see that the large white steed he followed was running away from him, and without apparent urging by his strange and terrible-looking rider.

He knew that his horse was going at a very great speed, yet the other, though not at his best, for he was running without an effort, was really rapidly dropping him.

Behind him came Rexford riding at the full speed of his horse, and following him came Grizzly Jim whose animal was also a fleet one; but not one was a match for the white flyer ahead, and as they reached the spot where the two horsemen lay, the Mad Marauder disappeared from view in the thicket.

"See what you can do for them, Grizzly Jim, while I follow him," called out the lieutenant.

"Don't go, sir, for it is useless," shouted Grizzly Jim, but the officer and the soldier sped on.

Into the thicket they dashed, then up a ridge to the top, and far away across the plain the flying white horse and his mad rider were visible going like the wind.

"It is no use, Rexford, for it would take a bird to catch him.

"I would give any price for that horse; but let us return to aid Grizzly Jim, for one of those men was not dead I noticed."

Back they went as the lieutenant uttered the words, and soon after they sprang from their panting horses at the scene of the madman's deadly attack.

There lay two men in the rough garb of miners, and near them were their saddle and pack-horses.

They were both lying as still as death, and a glance showed the lieutenant that one was dead.

He had a terrible cut across his head, and one that had at once proved fatal.

The other man had also a glancing blow on the head and yet it had not killed him though it had stunned him.

Grizzly Jim had been working with him,

and as the lieutenant came up he became conscious and turned his eyes upon him.

"My poor fellow, I fear you are badly wounded," said the officer, kindly.

"The blow on my head stunned me, but the thrust he first gave me with his ugly knife is fatal—I feel it."

"By Heaven, but he did give you a thrust, I see it now here in your back! but it may not be fatal."

"Ah, yes, I know."

"What was his reason for attacking you?"

"Gold."

"He expected he would get gold?"

"No, he knew that my pard and I were going where we could find gold—I know where it is, and that madman does too, for I recognized him, and he sought to kill us, as it is said he slays all who come this way in search of gold."

"You say that you know him?"

"I know him," and the dying man spoke with a great effort.

"Who is he?"

The man did not answer immediately, but at last said in almost a whisper:

"He is—"

A shudder ran through his frame, and Lieutenant Hammond placed his hand quickly on his pulse, and said:

"Poor fellow, he is dead."

"I will finish his sentence, sir, and tell you that that giant rider is known as the Mad Marauder of the Mines.

"He is mad, folks says, and I guesses they hain't far wrong, for he dresses in ther skins o' wild beasts, rides without saddle or bridle, allus goes at a run, just like his horse was mad, too, and kills for ther love of it.

"Bein' from the lower country, loot'nent, maybe you hain't heerd of him; but we knows him hereabout only too well.

"They says love of gold has crazed him, and that he belonged to a party o' gold-hunters all of whom was massacred by the Injuns save him, and that may hev turned his brain.

"No man has yet followed his trail thet hasn't been kilt, or had bad luck, and so they calls him ther Man of Ill-Omen, and you bet he is that.

"He attacks any force he thinks he kin git away with, and it was seejn' your uniforms thet run him off, for he looked for a comp'ny o' cavalry, yer see.

"He makes dashes into a settlement one time, then into a Injun village, and next into a mining-camp, and git off every time.

"Them poor fellows fired onto him, but missed him as all does, for he bears a charmed life.

"Ther Injuns looks at him as a evil spirit and won't try to kill him, and pale-faces is jist as scared of him.

"Now thet is what thet Man o' Ill-Omen be, loot'nent."

"Well, Grizzly Jim, I am obliged to you for telling me of him, and I remember that I have heard of the Mad Marauder before.

"But I am sure of one thing, and that is that the man who just died knew him, that is, knew more of him than others do, but death sealed his lips before he could utter what he would say.

"Now let us take these bodies to camp," and the two dead forms were put across their own saddles and taken to the camp on the hill.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ARRIVAL.

THE bodies of the two unfortunate gold-hunters were laid under a large tree to await burial, the horses staked out again, and while Grizzly Jim went on with the work of cooking dinner, Lieutenant Hammond and Rexford started in to dig a grave.

They had gotten it half dug when Grizzly Jim called them to dinner, and they hastened to enjoy it, for they were hungry, the officer putting on no airs, but eating with the others.

After a smoke and talk over the strange horseman and his deadly work, the grave was completed and the bodies wrapped in blankets and placed in it.

As it was late in the afternoon, and their camp was a good one against surprise, it was

decided that they should remain there until the morning.

The lieutenant opened the packs of the two men, discovered their names and where they were from, and having extra horses, now lightened the packs all around and divided up the weights their saddle-animals had been carrying.

Having seen how dangerous a foe the Mad Marauder had been, Grizzly Jim said he would sleep through the afternoon and until the others got ready to retire, when he would stand guard through the night.

Soon after dark Rexford cooked supper, and when it was ready Grizzly Jim was called and at nine o'clock went on duty.

But the night passed without any alarm, and the little party were in the saddle and ready to start at daybreak.

They followed the trail the Mad Marauder had taken, as it went their way, and until miles after it turned off toward a mountain range.

"I guess you are right, Grizzly Jim, and that he did think we had a company of soldiers, for he took good care not to stop anywhere near us; but I would give much to run down that man and get his horse."

"You bet you would, sir, for there is no other animal like him, and I hope thar hain't many more men like ther rider."

"Why, loot'nent, thar be three rewards on that mad rider's head, dead or alive."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir, there be, one from the settlements on this border of five thousand, ten thousand more from ther miners and five thousand from ther Goverment, and yet no one has yet got ther money, and mighty few is tryin' ter 'arn it that I has heerd on."

"You ask ther colonel at Fort M—, and he kin tell yer all about him; but here is a good place to camp for breakfast, sir."

The party had soon camped, breakfast was cooked and disposed of, and after a halt of an hour and a half the horses were pushed briskly on for a long ride before dinner.

At two another halt was made and when night came a camp was made for supper and rest, and to wait until the moon rose, when it was decided that they would push right on to the fort.

This they did, and when dawn broke Fort M— was in sight, and the tired horses pricked up their ears and quickened their pace, knowing that the end of their journey was at hand.

The approach of the party was reported by the sentinel in the lookout, and at first the lieutenant was supposed to be Surgeon Powell.

But soon after it was seen that he was not, and upon reaching the stockade gates he was recognized by the officer of the day and received a warm greeting.

"I am tired, sleepy, hungry, and bear dispatches, Berkman, and have much to tell of my trip."

"Please see that my guide gets good attention, for Rexford can look after himself among his old comrades, and I will hasten at once to see Colonel Merrill," said Lieutenant Hammond.

Without going to "brace up," as Captain Benedict suggested, Lieutenant Hammond went at once to headquarters, escorted by his brother officer, for the colonel, the latter said, was up, as he had seen him on his piazza half an hour before.

Lieutenant Hammond had never been to Fort M— before, yet he knew a number of officers there, and had served under Colonel Merrill years before on the frontier.

He was known as a dashing officer and a perfect soldier, while he had seen much of border service and had a will of iron in carrying out a duty he was sent on.

The colonel came out upon the piazza of his cabin quarters as the two officers approached, and after a close glance at the young lieutenant, called out cheerily:

"Ho, Hammond, glad to see you at Fort M—, but trust no serious trouble brings you here."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LIEUTENANT'S REPORT.

HAVING told Colonel Merrill that he brought dispatches from General Miles, down in New Mexico, and upon whose staff he was an aide, Lieutenant Hammond hand-

ed over the papers, and Captain Berkman having returned to his post, took the seat offered him.

"You looked fagged out, Hammond, so must have had a hard time of it, for it takes a good deal to pull you down I happen to remember."

"What escort had you?"

"A guide and two soldiers, sir, I started with, but I tried to rescue some miner prisoners from a small band of Indians, and lost my guide and one of my soldiers."

"One of the miners was also killed, and we were made prisoners along with the two we sought to aid, and, but for Surgeon Frank Powell, would have lost our scalps."

"Ha! you have seen Powell then?" quickly asked the colonel.

"We all owe him our lives, sir, for he it was, with one other, a young miner and a gentleman, who rescued us and then beat off a band of over half a hundred red-skins."

"It's a long story, colonel, and an interesting one, I assure you, and I am anxious to tell it when you can hear it, to account for my being four days behind the time when I should have delivered those dispatches to you."

"I feel that it was for the best of reasons that you delayed, Lieutenant Hammond, as I know you well; but go to your room and freshen up, while I look over these dispatches, and then we will have breakfast, for you will be my guest while here."

The colonel's invitation was a command; and so the young officer sent an orderly after his traps and went to the room assigned to him.

After shaving and putting on a fresh uniform he felt much refreshed, and heartily enjoyed the breakfast he sat down to.

The colonel had looked over the dispatches and said:

"There was no desperate haste for these papers to reach me, as you knew, Hammond, for the general has written that you are aware of their contents; but I shall at once act upon his suggestion and make a move with my troops to show the red-skins that we are on the watch for them and so put an end to this general uprising along the line that the general has information of their preparing for."

"It would be a good idea, sir, General Miles thinks, for the fort commanders to make a grand bluff, so to speak, and by so doing check the intention the red skins have of going upon the war-path."

"It shall be done, and as the general sets a date three days from this, I will have ample time to send couriers to the other two forts to join with me in the movement with every man that can be spared from the forts."

"Shall I not carry the orders to the other forts, sir?"

"No, indeed, for you have gone through enough in coming here, I can plainly see, and besides I wish to have your report in full, and know all about Surgeon Powell."

"I shall at once send the couriers with dispatches, and then I'll hear your story."

In half an hour the dispatches were prepared by the assistant adjutant-general and duplicates made of them and dispatched by different couriers, two to each fort, in case one should not get through all right.

Then the colonel turned to Lieutenant Hammond and said:

"I know that it is a very dangerous trail to come over, the one that you have followed, and you have done well to get through at all, starting with only a scout and two men as an escort; and I am much interested in knowing how you did it, so now to your story, lieutenant?"

Percy Hammond at once began to relate his adventures, since leaving General Miles's headquarters.

He had found it very dangerous travelling from the first, on account of roving bands red-skins, but his guide had been a good one and they had thus escaped capture several times.

Coming upon the small band that had Little Nugget and Grizzly Jim prisoners, he had sought to rescue them, been drawn into an ambush and lost his scout and a soldier, while he and Rexford had been taken prisoners.

"That we would escape looked very dubious, colonel, to all of us, and when we went

into camp and I saw Powell and one other drop two of the red-skins, and then dash out to our rescue, I was never more surprised in my life."

"The red-skins even in their panic, sought to run to us and kill us, but our rescuers made it so hot for them they fled in terror to their ponies, Powell following them while his companion ran up to where we were, cut my bonds, gave me a knife, and he set the others free and then went gunning for the Indians too."

"But Powell had stampeded the Red Birds, so we could only recover our weapons and horses, which they had left, with all of their camp outfit, and retreat to a rocky hill near by and prepare to stand them off."

And the lieutenant went on to tell of the fight and retreat of the Indians, of Powell's strategy and their all slipping away from the hill as they had done, and leaving dummy soldiers on guard and a couple of horses to make the camp appear still occupied.

CHAPTER XL.

UNFATHOMED.

COLONEL MERRILL had listened with the deepest attention, to all that Lieutenant Hammond had told him of the adventures he had met with on the trail.

When he had spoken of Surgeon Powell and Paul Paxton, the colonel had asked:

"Who is this comrade of Powell's, Hammond?"

"I can only say, sir, I know him as Paul Paxton, and, with four others he was mining in Bed Rock City."

"He is a gentleman, a plucky fellow and most pleasant companion."

"I have a report to make to you now, sir, which Doctor Powell desired me to make, and a written communication to you from Mr. Paxton, and this will doubtless explain, sir, Surgeon Powell's resignation from the army."

"Ah! I shall be glad to know some good reason, for I regretted very much to lose him from the service, as we all did, for there was no more popular man at the fort."

"And deservedly so, sir; but what I am to say to you from Surgeon Powell is that he resigned his commission, as he intended going upon a trail of revenge."

"Revenge?"

"Yes, sir."

"There were those who had in some way, just how I do not know, and he does not tell, cruelly wronged him and those he loved."

"He sought to avenge those wrongs, and learning that the one he most wished to find was mining in Bed Rock camps he went there."

"That one was a man by the name of David Dunston, and his companions, three in number, were men by the name of Valour, Turpin and Paul Paxton."

"Paxton, eh?"

"Yes, sir, but he was not one who had wronged Powell as the other three had, for it seems that the trio had leagued together in the mining country, and meeting, or knowing Paxton, he had joined them."

"That they were conscience-stricken you may know when I tell you that Dunston and his pards saw Powell ride into the camps and they at once sold out their claim to Buck Bolton, the gambler."

"I know him, and some day hope to hang him for his crimes."

"Powell has saved you that trouble, sir, for he killed Bolton."

The colonel sprang to his feet in his excitement and cried:

"Can this be true, that Powell has killed that wretch?"

"It is, sir."

"Then he avenged his brother officer killed by Bolton, yes, and many others, too."

"As the Dunston party left on seeing Powell enter the camps, the landlord directed the doctor to Bolton, who at once said that they were gone, but he had bought out their claims, and their debts, even of life or death, and he was answerable."

"That was enough for Powell, to fling such a gauntlet in his face."

"Yes, colonel, and a duel followed, Pow-

ell breaking the gambler's hand with a shot, and then being forced to kill him."

The story of the supposed youth who was the Surgeon's Scout's second, was made known, then the taking of the trail by the four fugitives, killing of Demon Dick, and the coming to Dunston's camp, with the triple duel that followed.

Colonel Merrill seemed deeply moved, for he was much attached to the Surgeon Scout, and he then had the written statement of Paul Paxton, and said:

"Yes, Frank Powell resigned, as he was too honorable a man to wear a uniform and still go on a trail of revenge.

"That he did kill these men is proof that he had every reason for his act, and he has my sympathy in all that he has passed through.

"It all seems like a romance, Lieutenant Hammond, and yet it is all true.

"But what you tell me about Powell's going alone on the trail troubles me, and that, too, into the Indian country.

"What can it mean?"

"It is as much a mystery to me, sir, as to you.

"He told me nothing more than that he had a mission to perform, and went on it alone.

"He left us after leaving the camp, and, of course, since then I have heard nothing of him; but, by obeying his instructions we reached Bed Rock in safety, but whether pursued by the red-skins or not, I do not know."

"And this girl you refer to, this little Nugget, is a mystery?"

"She is, sir, and a very beautiful one.

"She is innocent-faced, she is educated, refined, and though clad as a youth, is modest and retiring.

"As regards fear, she does not know the word, and she now remains in Bed Rock City to have Paul Paxton settle up the property left by her gambler husband Bolton, who has a number of claims in paying leads there, and left her very rich."

"Well, Powell did a good service in ridding the earth of Buck Bolton, and I am glad that she so understands it," said the colonel, warmly.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON THE RETURN TRAIL.

HAVING made known to the colonel the happenings at Bed Rock, and how generously Paul Paxton and Little Nugget had treated him and the soldier Rexford, Lieutenant Hammond went on to state that he had secured the services of Grizzly Jim as a guide to the fort, and relate the adventures they had had with the Mad Marauder of the mines.

"I have heard of that Man of Ill-Omen time and again, and, as the old guide told you, there are rewards offered for him dead or alive.

"He has been on the border for years, ranging from New Mexico into Arizona and Colorado, and his name has become a terror in settlements, mining camps and even in the forts, though I have yet to learn of his having attacked a soldier.

"But others he is merciless to.

"He has, single-handed, attacked emigrant trains, bands of Indians and dashed into camps and settlers until he is justly called the Merciless Marauder, and the Deadly Hand Demon."

"So he killed both of the unfortunate men, one of whom you think knew him?"

"Yes, sir, and I brought on their papers and effects to send to their homes, for I found their address and names among their effects."

"Poor fellows, they met but the fate of far too many who come to this wild, unsettled land; but there are generations to come who will reap the benefits made possible by a vast human sacrifice of brave pioneers and soldiers," said the colonel sadly.

When the lieutenant had finished his story he said:

"Is there no way, colonel, that this Mad Marauder can be run down?"

"There has been no way discovered yet, and I know of half a dozen brave scouts who have gone out especially to hunt him down, and five of them never returned."

"And the sixth, sir?"

"Is in the asylum, as mad as the mysterious man he went to kill.

"What he saw no one knows; but his horse brought him back to the fort half-starved, half-naked, hatless, shoeless, and without bridle or saddle.

"His weapons were gone, and the man was dazed and would not utter a word.

"He got better physically, but his mind is a wreck, and he will not talk of what happened to him, though Surgeon Powell felt assured that he knows perfectly well.

"Poor fellow, it would have been better had he been killed."

"It is demoralizing, sir, to feel that there is such a person roaming at large, who cannot be run down."

"I should think it was demoralizing, for scouts who would face death in any form, do not care to behold that man, and the soldiers speak of him as the Man of Ill-omen.

"All the traps laid for him he is too cunning to be caught in, and he rides a horse that has no equal for speed and endurance."

"I had a proof of that myself, sir."

"So you see there is nothing to be done except to hope that he may be captured or killed by accident some day."

"I hope it may be soon, sir."

"So do I.

"Why, Hammond, I sent three hundred men on a search for him once, and they were gone ten days.

"They did not even see him, but he followed them into the settlement above here and killed two men at their own cabin."

"He is a terror, sir."

"Powell was wont to say that he would like to meet him some day, but he is the one whom I have heard longing for the opportunity, and I should dislike to have even Frank Powell come across that man."

"So would I, sir, unless he was well supported.

"I was very silly to press on after him as I did, after Grizzly Jim's warning, as he might have ambushed me."

"Yes, though, as I have said, I have never heard yet of a single instance where he has taken the life of a man in uniform, and numerous chances are cited where he had the opportunity."

"Now, Colonel Merrill, about my return, sir, for Grizzly Jim will guide me back to beyond Bed Rock City where I know the trail."

"When do you wish to go?"

"I am at your service, sir; but am anxious to return as soon as you will permit."

"All right, rest a couple of days here, and then start."

"Your adventures must be known, save Powell's triple duel, which I will not yet speak of, and you will find yourself a hero here among the ladies, lieutenant."

"Now make the rounds and see some of your brother officers."

"The lieutenant did make the rounds and everywhere was received with the greatest of pleasure by his brother officers.

He spoke modestly of his trail on, and it was not until after the colonel had made known his adventures on the trail, that it was seen how really modest he had been, and then he at once became a hero indeed.

That he had actually seen and pursued the Mad Marauder, was a great feather in his cap, and also that he had not only met the Surgeon Scout but been rescued by him from the Indians.

Hearing of the romance of Little Nugget a number of the young officers expressed a desire to be sent on some duty to Bed Rock City to see the handsome young heroine, the gambler's widow, and asked Lieutenant Hammond if he did not wish an escort back to the mines.

Many questions were asked about Surgeon Powell, and all regretted that he had gone up into the Indian country upon some mission of mystery they could not fathom.

After two days at the fort, during which he got but little rest, Lieutenant Hammond started upon the return trail, accompanied by Soldier Rexford and Grizzly Jim, and the whole garrison was on hand to bid them a safe journey and good luck.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN THE LIONS' DEN.

THE scene changes once more to the village of the Sioux, in the village which was their stronghold among the mountains, the passes of which were well guarded.

Frank Powell entered the village with a face as calm as a May morning.

There was not a shadow upon his brow, no pallor of the skin, no expression of dread upon his fine face, though he knew that he was alone amid thousands of foes.

It was true that he went with those whom he had well befriended, the daughter of the Medicine Chief Death Fighter, whom he had saved from the knife of the renegade, the chief War Eagle, whom he had kept back from the grave, and other wounded red-skins who had to acknowledge his skill and kindness.

But amid all those Indians who hated the pale-faces, to whom his own name had been a terror, might there not be some who would demand his life?

If such a question came into his mind his looks did not show it.

The line of march was taken up first for the large tepee of the young chief, War Eagle, and amid yells, wailing and chant, the returned party held their way.

Red Bird, or as Doctor Powell had named her, the Little Girl Soldier Sioux, rode by the side of Big Medicine, the pale-face.

She appeared to wish to give him confidence that she being his friend all would be well.

Arriving at the tepee of the chief, with every eye upon him, Frank Powell sprang to the ground and at once called about him the braves who were to move the War Eagle to his quarters.

He went into the tepee and arranged the bed himself, and then ordered the warriors to bring him in, aiding himself so that there would be no movement that might bring on a hemorrhage from the wounds.

The chief was placed upon his bed and then, addressing the braves to keep the tepee clear, Doctor Powell dressed the wounds, with the greatest care.

When all was done, he heard the words lowly spoken:

"The Big Medicine Chief of the Pale-faces will go to the tepee now of the Little Soldier, as he calls the Red Bird, and see her father, the Death Fighter."

"I will first go and see to the wounded braves in their tepees, now that they are at home, for they need my care.

"Then I will come to the lodge of the Red Bird."

"Does not the White Medicine Chief fear to go among the lodges of my people?"

"Oh, no, my red brothers will do me no harm.

"I do not fear them."

"The Red Bird knows the tepees of the braves who are wounded, and she will go with the Medicine Chief."

The Indian girl was evidently afraid to put too much faith in her people, when the Surgeon Scout was concerned.

She wished to be assured of his safety among them first.

And Frank Powell understood her motive and was glad to have her go, for he, though not wishing to show fear of them, well knew his danger.

"The white chief is in the home of his red brothers, and he is welcome.

"Let him feel that he is as though in the lodges of his own people."

The words were uttered in a low, faint tone, but they reached the ears of Frank Powell.

It was the War Eagle who spoke, and he added, as though he too felt a dread that some brave might be hostile:

"Will the Red Bird go with the white chief to see my wounded braves, and then take him to the tepee of her father?"

"But his home is here in the War Tepee."

This was an honor indeed, and understanding it the Surgeon Scout appreciated it, for the War Tepee was a sacred lodge, where the relics taken from foes in battle were kept, and in which the head chief of a friendly tribe in visiting the village alone was allowed to sleep.

Red Bird smiled at the honor bestowed, seeming to be very glad of it and said:

"The great chief, War Eagle, has spoken well—the White Medicine Chief shall rest in the War Tepee."

Then she led the way to the lodges of the wounded braves, going first to the one where the warrior was who had lost his arm, and who was proud of the name given him by Doctor Powell of One Arm Killer.

As they left the tepee of the War Eagle they met an Indian Medicine Chief in full war-paint and dressed most gorgeously.

He had a tom-tom in his hand that he struck as he walked along, as though to herald his approach as one of importance.

He was almost a giant in size, being six feet five inches in height, with broad shoulders, sinewy limbs and a man of very great strength.

"It is the Medicine Chief Red Lightning, and he has a bad heart."

"Let the White Medicine Chief beware of him," said Red Bird as he approached, and her face clouded as though she was sorry to meet the Indian.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MEDICINE CHIEF RED LIGHTNING.

If she could have done so Red Bird would have glided by Red Lightning.

But he would not have it so.

He saw the Red Bird, and he saw that she had a pale-face with her.

Red Lightning was an Indian feared more than any other in the village, for many believed that his heart was bad.

He was a young chief, had made a record in battle, and afterward as a medicine-chief.

He had forms that he went through with the sick that gave all a superstitious fear of him, and often frightened the invalid to death.

He dressed in the wildest, most gorgeous and weirdest manner, and he had dared become the rival of the head chief, War Eagle, for the hand of the Red Bird.

Next to War Eagle and Death Fighter he held power, and he used it for his own ends.

Instead of living in a tepee, his home was in a cave in the cliffs overlooking the village, and few cared to go there.

He had a following of his band, consisting of a hundred young braves, and his word was law to them, and several times had his command sentenced a warrior to death.

Such was the chief whom Frank Powell now had to face, and one who stood as the strongest man in the tribe, the fleetest on foot, and the deadliest foe in a combat.

"The Red Bird has escaped from the wolf and come back to her nest."

"The Red Lightning is glad," said the Indian.

"The Red Bird comes back because the great White Medicine Chief here saved her from death, shot the traitor chief Killer, and dressed the wounds of War Eagle, and kept him from going to the happy hunting-grounds."

"The white chief is her brother, and the brother of the War Eagle."

"Let the Red Lightning welcome him."

But, as though not hearing this request the Indian said:

"I have heard that the War Eagle came back wounded by the Killer, and that there were braves who also came back suffering from pale-face bullets."

"The Red Lightning was not sent for to heal their wounds, but he is now going to the tepee of the War Eagle to care for him."

Red Bird looked frightened and quickly said:

"The White Medicine Chief has cared for him, and he is going to care for the others, now that they are in their own tepees."

"The Red Lightning is kind, but the wounded chief and braves are under the care of the White Medicine Chief."

"The white chief is our foe, and should die."

"I will see the War Eagle."

For the first time Doctor Powell spoke.

He had been quietly taking the measure of the Indian and read him thoroughly.

"He is a dangerous man, and holds power by fear."

"I must not yield to him," he muttered to himself.

Then he said aloud, addressing the Indian in his calm way:

"The War Eagle is asleep, and needs not the care of the Medicine Chief Red Lightning."

"Let him stay away from his tepee until he sends for him."

"Does the pale-face dog dare tell the Red Lightning his duty?" roared the Indian savagely.

"The Red Lightning is a fool—I do not fear him," was the quick retort.

What the Indian would have done or said was quickly checked by Red Bird.

The young girl rose to the occasion.

She drew her form up, her eyes flashed, and stepping up to the furious chief she said in a voice that rung with earnestness and anger:

"The Red Lightning is a fool."

"His tongue is crooked, his heart is bad."

"Does he dare say that the War Eagle and the Red Bird's white brother shall be spit upon?"

"Does he forget that the Red Bird is the daughter of the great chief Death Fighter?"

"Does he forget that she is to be the bride of the War Eagle?"

"Let him turn his steps and go to his cave in the cliffs with shame, for if he dares go near the tepee of the War Eagle he shall have to deal with the Death Fighter."

"The Red Bird has spoken."

The chief, strong as he felt himself to be in his power, quailed before the young girl.

He knew that her word was as law there, as powerful as that of the War Eagle or the Death Fighter.

He felt that a call from her would bring the young braves that were her father's band about her, and the War Eagle's one word would sentence him to death.

Bold as he was, he dared not put his will against that of the Red Bird, and he knew it.

Cunning as a fox, he retreated from his position, and said:

"The Red Bird has spoken, and the Red Lightning obeys."

"He will welcome the white chief, and take him to his tepee."

"No, the White Medicine Chief goes with the Red Bird."

"Let the Red Lightning go his way."

"He would see the pale-face medicine-man care for the wounded braves."

Red Bird could offer no objection to this, and the Indian followed, his face black with anger.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE RIVAL DOCTORS.

THE tepee of the one-armed brave was the first one that Red Bird led the Surgeon Scout to, and they found there a large number of the kindred and friends of the wounded man.

The Indian lay upon a robe in the tepee, and seemed feverish and excited, but was glad to see his pale-face doctor.

In a few words the Surgeon Scout explained that the treatment of pale-face medicine-men was different from that of the Indian doctors, and said that as he had begun with the patient, he wished to bring him through all right, so he begged the kindred and friends not to disturb One Arm Killer, but leave him to the care of one nurse.

The Red Lightning glared at him, and told the people not to go; but One Arm Killer said boldly that the white chief was his medicine-man, and he wished him to care for him.

Some sneered at this, others hesitated, and Red Bird spoke:

"The great White Medicine Chief is here by the wish of his red brother, the War Eagle."

"Let my people obey his will, not that of the Red Lightning."

Instantly the crowd dispersed, all save the mother and sister of the wounded brave.

Then Doctor Powell felt his pulse, the red-skin doctor looking on the while with a vicious expression, and finding him feverish from excitement, gave him some medicine.

Then he unbound the stump of the arm and dressed it over again with the greatest of care, remarking cheerfully:

"The One Arm Killer is doing well, but he must keep quiet and he will soon be in the saddle again."

He made him a fresh bed of robes, placed him on it and then left him.

Another of the wounded braves was then visited, the red doctor following close upon the heels of the Red Bird and his white rival.

Here, as before, a number of kindred and friends were visiting, and they were dismissed by a few words from the Indian girl, after Doctor Powell had told them his wish.

As at One Arm Killer's tepee Red Lightning eyed every movement of his rival, gazed fixedly at the wound, watched its being dressed, saw the medicine given the brave to soothe him, and then followed to the next tepee.

So it went on until the rounds were made by Red Bird and the Surgeon Scout, the Indian medicine-man following like a shadow.

Red Bird was glad to see that the patients all showed perfect faith in the white chief, not one of them expressing a wish to switch off to the Red Lightning.

This confidence they had conveyed to their relatives and friends, and as it was also told them how the pale-face chief had saved Red Bird and Chief War Eagle from death, and killing the renegade kidnapper the Killer, had given the young girl his scalp, the Indians began to feel that he who had been their much dreaded foe was now indeed their friend.

At each tepee the Red Lightning had made some rude remark about his rival, but it only ended in a rebuke from Red Bird that mortified him.

Still he did not learn a lesson, and kept on. When the last of the wounded braves had been seen, and Red Lightning knew just how many there were, he asked gruffly:

"Where does the Red Bird take the pale-face now?"

"To the tepee of the Death Fighter, where the Red Lightning had better not come and anger the Red Bird or the White Medicine Chief."

"The Red Lightning has ears—has he heard?"

"The Red Lightning has ears."

"He will go to the tepee of the Death Fighter."

Red Bird made no reply and led the way to one of the rustic bridges, which the Indians had thrown across the stream here and there.

A number of squaws and children were gathered there, along with a few braves, and they greeted the Red Bird as though they greatly loved her.

But curious and dark glances were cast upon the Surgeon Scout.

Going up to the group of tepees where dwelt the great Medicine Chief Death Fighter he was discovered seated out in a swinging chair, hung from the limb of a tree.

His appearance was majestic, for his hair was iron-gray, his form tall and his costume most gorgeous.

The Indian girl had sent a special messenger to her father to tell him of her delay in coming at once to him, and that the pale-face chief would accompany her.

She saw him now in all the regalia of his rank wearing his war-bonnet and with his lasso, bow and arrows in his hands, and she knew that he had heard the story of her rescue and all that happened and had prepared to welcome the white chief with honor.

The old chief seldom left his tepee now, for he had many wounds, gained in battle long before, that troubled and crippled him, and he left the duties of medicine-man to Red Lightning and others.

But his eye was bright, his form erect, voice clear and strong, and he held his power still, the head chief in the village, while the War Eagle was the commander-in-chief of the braves in the field.

As they approached him he arose from his swinging seat to greet them.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE WHITE BEAVER.

As Red Bird advanced toward her father she quickened her pace and going up to him received his greeting with a few low-uttered words of joy at her escape from death and return.

Behind the old chief stood a score of his immediate followers, medicine-men, all as upright and still as statues.

His greeting to her over, Red Bird said:

"This is the great White Medicine Chief, my father, to whom I owe my life.

"He killed the false chief the Killer; and see, he hung his scalp at my belt.

"He saved the life of the War Eagle and of a number of his braves."

Frank Powell had approached the chief and stood in silence before him, the Red Lightning still at his back.

He knew much of the Indian customs, and when the Red Bird had spoken he waited to see just how the old chief would receive him.

"If I am solid with the old doctor-in-chief, I'll catch on with the rest of the faculty and Red Lightning can go chase himself around the camp," he muttered with grim humor at the position he found himself in.

The head chief gazed an instant into the face of the white man before him.

He knew him well, and when last in the field, several years before, they had met in battle.

The old chief knew that the pale-face was a man whom his braves greatly dreaded, and was known as the bravest of the brave.

That he had dug the grave of many of his warriors he well knew, but it had been in open combat.

He loved a brave man, and he knew well that one who held no fear stood before him.

He saw that in his bold manner and fearless eyes that met his own.

He had heard the whole story from those who were there, of the rescue of his child by the white man.

They reported how he had cared for a brave just as kindly as he had for the chief.

And he knew that he had gone the rounds of the village with Red Bird, making the wounded comfortable.

The chief was a man of great intelligence, and he was well aware how much the pale-face medicine-men knew of surgery and medicine.

Once he had been a prisoner, wounded and suffering among the pale-faces, and he had been treated most kindly.

He knew that if left to his own medicine men he would have died.

So he was glad to have the benefit of the white man's skill for the wounded chief and his young men.

He was more than glad also to learn that he had his surgical instruments and medicines with him, for he felt that he could relieve him of pain he then suffered from an unextracted bullet.

All these things had passed through the mind of the old chief before Red Bird brought the Surgeon Scout to his tepee, and his mind was already made up as to his course.

So, when the white chief stood before him he bent over and placed at his feet the lance, bow and arrows he held in his hand.

Frank Powell's face flushed, for he knew that he was received with marked honor.

"Let the great White Medicine Chief take the weapons of the Death Fighter, and know that he is as a brother to my people," the chief said with dignity, and the Red Bird smiled with delight.

The Surgeon Scout was equal to the honor done him, for he bent over, took up the weapons, slung them at his back, and unbuckling his belt with the pair of revolvers and bowie-knife in it, stepped forward and handed it to the chief with the words:

"The Death Fighter is a great war-chief and mighty medicine-man.

"My people know him well.

"Let the white chief give him his own weapons to wear."

The face of Death Fighter flushed with pride, his eyes flashed with joy, and not to be outdone he called out:

"Let the Red Bird bring the sacred robe of the white beavers, and the war-bonnet that accompanies it, for the pale-face brave shall wear them and be known as the White Beaver, a great chief among my people."

Darting into the tepee in a few moments Red Bird returned bearing a large robe made of no less than sixteen white beaver-skins.*

* The white beaver is very scarce, and is looked upon among the Indians as a sacred animal.

The skins were snowy white, the edge of the robe was fringed around with buckskin dyed red, and the inner part was worked in designs of various kinds with porcupine-quills of many colors.

The war-bonnet was of eagle-feathers, dyed and undyed, and fell almost to the feet of the wearer.

Both were new and most gorgeous, the robe being fastened about the neck with mountain-lion legs dressed and with the claws on.

With his own hands the old chief placed the sacred war-bonnet and white beaver robe upon the Surgeon Scout, and the pipe of peace was at once passed around, all joining in it save Red Lightning, who stood apart gazing on with a look of bitterest hatred.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CHALLENGE.

THE Surgeon Scout knew full well the great honor bestowed upon him by the old chief.

He had expected full protection, after what he had done, and kind treatment from some of the Indians, but he had not supposed that he would be the recipient of such honors.

Aware that the red-skins held the white beaver as a sacred animal, and how great was the value of their skins, he knew that he had been given what, to them, was a small fortune in the robe and gorgeous war-bonnet.

Then too there went with them a power second only to that of the War Eagle, and the great Medicine Chief, Death Fighter.

He glanced at Red Lightning, and he saw that he had in him the deadliest of foes.

That very robe had Red Lightning hoped for, and that bonnet of eagle plumes as well.

They had been bestowed upon Death Fighter when too old to wear them, as it were, and the cunning sub-chief had coveted them, and was looking forward to his superior's death at no distant day when he would be the ranking medicine of the tribe.

Could it be now that this pale-face was to step into his shoes?

It certainly looked so.

Thus feeling he would not smoke the pipe of welcome and of peace.

Death Fighter saw him push the pipe from him and glare at the pale-face, and he asked sternly:

"What means the Red Lightning's clouded face and fierce eyes among his brothers?"

"Why does he refuse to smoke the welcome pipe to the pale-face chief White Beaver?"

"The pale-face is a snake in the grass.

"He has come among us to betray us to his people.

"He would win the Red Bird from her father."

"The Red Lightning is the snake, and he speaks with a crooked and evil tongue.

"The pale-face chief was asked to come to our village, after all he had done for the War Eagle and the Red Bird.

"The Red Lightning has hate in his heart, and acts like an old squaw."

It was the Red Bird who answered him, and she spoke with just anger.

Her father seemed pleased at her words, and added:

"Will the Red Lightning forget that he is a chief, that he is a man, and as the Red Bird says, behave like a squaw?"

This last sting seemed to sink deep and hurt the young Medicine Chief more than all else, for he shouted out with savage earnestness:

"The Red Lightning has a record.

"He is no squaw.

"The scalps of many foes hang in his tepee, and there are pale-face scalps among them.

"He has hunted the pale-face soldiers, he has killed them, has burned their homes and run off their horses and cattle.

"He is a great chief, and he is willing to show his courage before his people and dare the pale-face medicine-man to fight him.

"The pale-face has been honored greatly, and if he deserves those honors he will meet the Red Lightning.

"If he refuses he is not worthy of the

sacred war-bonnet and the white beaver robe about his shoulders.

"Is he a man, or is he a dog that the Red Lightning can kick from his path?"

These defiant words of the irate chief caused a commotion.

Every eye was upon the White Beaver.

The Red Lightning had challenged him, and even the power of the head chief could not stay those words once uttered.

The Red Bird knew well that the Red Lightning had played for a high stake.

He had dogged his pale-face foe for a purpose, and had hurled his challenge in his teeth.

To her it meant the death of her preserver, and the triumph of the cunning Medicine Chief, for who could withstand his great strength?

The head chief also looked anxious for his guest's safety.

But he could say nothing once the challenge had been uttered.

The other chiefs also seemed to feel that their comrade had forced a fight upon one who was their friend as he had been their foe.

Thus all eyes turned upon White Beaver, the pale-face Medicine Chief.

He seemed not in the least disturbed, and his face never changed color in the slightest.

In fact they saw a smile upon his face, and turning to the head chief he said:

"The Red Lightning has challenged me to fight him to the death.

"Did I refuse I would be unworthy to wear this robe and this war-bonnet.

"I shall not refuse."

Then he turned toward the Red Lightning who had seemed to hope that he would be afraid to meet him, and thus prove himself a coward.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

WALKING calmly up to Red Lightning, who was anxious to fight the pale-face, yet hoped that he would prove a coward, White Beaver said:

"The Red Lightning has spoken.

"I will show his people that he has spoken with a lying tongue, for I will fight him.

"If he is not afraid to die let him meet the White Beaver in battle."

All saw that the size and strength of the Red Lightning held no terrors for the pale-face, and yet they felt that he had no chance with one who could handle the Sioux braves like children.

The voice of the head chief broke in then upon the silence, and he said:

"The Red Lightning has heard.

"The White Beaver will fight him.

"Let the people be called together, and the fight take place, for the scalp of one of them must be taken."

The chiefs dispersed to call the people together, and while they were gathering in front of the tepee of the great Medicine Chief, Death Fighter bade one of his men take the White Beaver to where he could prepare for the fight.

The Red Lightning had said, and contrary to the civilized code as the challenger he had the right to say, that he would fight the pale face on horseback, and with knives.

Red Bird glanced at the White Beaver when it was so decided, but he seemed indifferent to the mode of fighting, and simply went with a chief after his horse.

He chose Rattler, and looked well to his equipment.

He had an extra belt of arms in his pack, and buckled them on, intending to lay the revolvers aside and depend only upon his knife.

It was a new bowie-knife, long-bladed and keen.

Returning to the scene, he went up to Death Fighter and reported himself as ready for the fray, as soon as he had cast aside his fatigue coat and vest, appearing in his silk negligee shirt, and wearing his sombrero.

Red Lightning rode upon a splendid pony, black as jet and very spirited, while he was larger than the ordinary Indian pony.

He was wild-looking in his war paint, and gorgeous in his beaded hunting-shirt, leggings and war-bonnet.

His pony was also gayly caparisoned.

The whole village, save the badly-wounded, aged and younger children, were present, ranged in a circle forming a space of an acre in size.

They parted as the Red Lightning rode in on one side, and stuck his lance in the ground in the center of the human-walled space.

White Beaver had been talking to the head chief, by whose side stood Red Bird, and about him were the medicine-chiefs.

As the Red Lightning appeared in the ring, White Beaver mounted his horse, the Indians opened a lane for him, and he was soon within the fatal circle.

There sat Red Lightning upon his horse in the center, and with one of his well-known and terrible war-cries, the pale-face spurred forward to meet the red-skin.

Red Lightning uttered his battle-cry and rushed to meet his foe.

Both men grasped their reins in their left hand, and in their right were their knives, ugly-looking instruments of death.

As they came close together and the Indian chief was about to draw rein and grasp his foe for the death-struggle, Rattler gave a mighty swerve to one side, a bound, and striking the Indian pony a terrible blow, sent him down as though he had been shot.

Red Lightning caught on one foot and one knee, but, ere he could rise, the Surgeon Scout had leaped from his saddle and was upon him.

As soon as he realized the trick of the pale-face in throwing his horse, and saw that the pony did not rise, his neck being broken, Red Lightning was convinced that he had a most dangerous foe to meet, and threw up his arm to ward off a blow of the knife.

But the arm was dealt a stinging blow from the Surgeon Scout's left that benumbed it for a second, and then the same hand grasped the wrist of the Indian's right that held the knife.

Maddened with the fear of defeat, the Indian chief threw the whole of his mighty strength upon his enemy to crush him by weight and power, for, as has been said, he was a giant in size.

But the giant red-skin had for once met his match in strength, for the agile, lightning-like moving white man was too quick for him, and when the measuring of strength came the red-skins all saw that, powerful as was the terrible chief, his adversary was the stronger of the two.

Still grasping the knife hand of the Indian, the Surgeon Scout, by a quick movement and a trip, threw him half-over on one knee, and then, with every sinew at play and strained to its utmost tension, he bent him slowly backward.

It seemed to the mute lookers-on as though it could not be the mighty Red Lightning who was being bent backward so slowly, yet ever so surely.

Would he not yet hurl his foe from him?

He made the effort, but in vain.

Slowly the massive frame was bent backward, until the body was curved like a hoop.

Then came a defiant war-cry from Red Lightning and a mighty effort to hurl off his foe.

In vain it was.

He tried then to wriggle loose from the iron grasp that held him, to clutch at the knife which the white man held in his teeth while he used both his hands upon him, and last, to twist his own knife so that the blade would gash the hard-drawn sinews of his foe.

But all in vain.

At last the war-bonnet of the Red Lightning touched the ground.

Upon the proud feathers was placed the foot of the Surgeon Scout, and a savage shake of the form of the Indian, dragged it from his head into the dust.

Then quick as a flash his right hand released its hold of the Indian's left, it grasped the bowie-knife between his teeth, there was a hard blow and the blade sunk to the hilt in the body of the chief whom all had so feared.

Instantly his arms relaxed, and springing back the Surgeon Scout faced the head chief and said:

"The Red Lightning was a great chief.

"I will not rob him of his scalp, so let his people bury him in honor."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WINNING FAVOR.

No act that the Surgeon Scout could have done, would have been more appreciated by the Indians than that he refused to take the scalp of his foe, a trophy he was fully entitled to.

They knew that his scalp would have been instantly taken by Red Lightning, and not a word would have been said, not a hand raised, had he claimed what was his right against the red-skin.

The immediate band of the Red Lightning had considered their chief unconquerable.

He had been wont, in their games, to handle three of his best young braves at one time.

He was fleet of foot, could leap higher and further, and excel in all tests of strength and endurance.

And yet he had more than met his match with the pale-face.

The truth was that all realized that the white man was the stronger of the two, his muscles were better trained, he was quicker in movement, and he could endure more, for he had the red-skin winded before he killed him.

It took a lightning movement to let go his grip, seize his knife from between his teeth and drive it into the body of his foe before that foe could resist the effort by the movement of an arm.

There were scowling looks cast upon the pale-face when he killed the red-skin.

They saw their idol shattered, fear him though they did.

But the moment that Surgeon Powell refused to take the gory trophy from his adversary's scalp, the clouded looks passed away.

The great chief would not be disgraced, he could be buried in honor and go to the happy hunting-grounds, which, if he had lost his scalp would not be the case in Indian theology.

Stepping up to where the head chief sat in his swinging chair, Doctor Powell, in no boastful tone, said simply:

"The fight has ended, Chief Death Fighter.

"The Red Lightning would not receive me as a brother, he sought my life and lost his.

"The pale-faces do not take scalps in battle, and the weapons and ponies of the Red Lightning I do not claim, for they go to his kindred."

"The White Beaver has shown himself a mighty warrior, and he has a heart that is good.

"His hand is of iron, he is brave beyond men, his eye is bright, his tongue talks straight.

"My people will respect him, and he can go and come at will.

"He is one of us."

"No, no, great chief, I am still a pale-face, though the friend of your people.

"I am no renegade to my own race, and I came here to make the War Eagle and others well.

"When my work is done, I must go my way.

"But I see that the great chief Death Fighter suffers.

"He has been a mighty medicine-man, and has cured many sick; but his wounds received in battle trouble him, and I can help him, can take away his pain," and the White Beaver pointed to the wounded foot of the chief.

It was just what the old chief wanted.

He did not wish to acknowledge that he could not help himself, yet he was sure that the pale-face doctor of another race could help him.

He even smiled at the words and said:

"The Death Fighter is an old man.

"The snows of winter are upon his head.

"He is nearing the river which he must cross to the happy hunting-grounds of his people.

"But he suffers, pain from his wounds, and if the great medicine-man of the pale-faces wishes to help him he can do so."

"The White Beaver can and will do so," earnestly said the Red Bird.

So it was decided that the White Beaver should at once go to his tepee, make himself comfortable there, and the next day set to work on the old chief, when he had made the rounds of the village and seen the wounded.

It did not take Frank Powell long to adapt himself to circumstances, and he was soon at home in the tepee assigned to him.

His own provisions, excepting such as he set aside for the wounded chief, he determined to keep for himself when again on the trail, and while there partake of Indian pot-luck.

He had some canned soups which he knew would strengthen the wounded, and he cooked them himself, and took them to War Eagle, One Arm Killer, and the next brave most seriously wounded, saving for the Death Fighter a share.

He was glad to remain in the tepee with the War Eagle, when the whole village turned out the next day to the burial of Red Lightning, but the sounds of wailing came distinctly to his ears.

The rest had made a great change in War Eagle and the other wounded for the better, and the young chief said to him:

"The Red Lightning had a bad heart, and wished to kill the White Beaver.

"The White Beaver was his master, and sent him to the happy hunting grounds."

This was all the young chief said of the affair, though he expressed himself as glad that the white beaver robe and name had been given his pale-face friend and brother.

Having gone his rounds, White Beaver went to the tepee of Death Fighter, and found the chief ready for the operation.

There was a bullet in his leg that kept the wound constantly open and gave him much pain.

The bullet was quickly extracted, the wound dressed, and the old chief given some medicine that would build him up after the long drain he had suffered.

"In a few weeks I will have found out all I would know, and I can leave my red-skin patients on the road to recovery.

"Then I will go on the mission I am determined to accomplish," mused Frank Powell as he lay on his blanket-bed that night in the Indian camp.

CHAPTER XLIX.

AN EVIL SPIRIT.

SOME ten days passed after the arrival of White Beaver in the Indian village, and his patients were one and all doing splendidly.

The chief War Eagle was out of danger and progressing rapidly toward recovery.

One Arm Killer was about, his arm healing well, and the others were also about and bestowing all praise upon the mysterious medicine-man of the pale-faces.

He had been called in to see numerous other cases of injuries and sickness, and, as the head chief believed in his cures, those under him were glad to learn much from him in the cure of diseases and care of the sick.

Once the cause of trouble had been removed from the leg of Death Fighter, the wound quickly healed, and the old chief felt that he would soon be well again, and, as he expressed it, "almost like a young brave again."

In his leisure time the doctor had gone with some of the braves on hunts through the mountains, and his unerring rifle had always loaded his horse with game, while, experts though the Indians were in fishing he surprised them greatly with his rod and reel in snaring the best of fish in the streams.

One morning, the eleventh of his stay in the Indian village, a band of red-skins came into the village in great alarm.

They had been off on a hunt, which meant for game or scalps, whichever came their way first.

They came back without either and in great alarm.

The cause White Beaver learned from the head chief.

"They saw the Evil Spirit," said the chief.

Frank Powell knew enough of the superstitions of red-skins to take their assertion of seeing an evil spirit for what it was worth; but he asked the chief:

"What is an evil spirit?"

Death Fighter seemed glad to explain, for he was anxious to get the views of the white man regarding one who was a perfect terror to his people.

What he told White Beaver was in effect that years before a band of gold-hunters had gone into a mountain-range many miles from the Indian village, and the red-skins had arranged to massacre them all after they had established their camp.

He, the old chief, had led the band against them, some three hundred in number.

They had followed the trail into the mountains, to where it crossed a torrent, and there lost all trace of it.

In vain they searched, for it could not be found again, and which way the hunters had gone the most expert Indian scouts could not find out.

For weeks the red-skin band roamed the mountains looking for the gold-hunters, but in vain, and they called in the different bands to the main camp intending to return to their village on the morrow.

That night there was a terrible storm came up, the thunder and lightning was fearful to hear and behold, and the Indians were terrified at the fury of the elements, which they took as a warning that the Great Spirit had destroyed the band of hunters, and was angry with his red children for daring to look for them.

In the midst of the storm there were shrieks heard of the wildest kind, bursts of demoniacal laughter and savage war-cries.

They seemed to come from all around their camps, and yet the Indians dared not fly as they would dash to death over some precipice.

They at last beheld through the darkness, standing upon the edge of a cliff a couple of hundred feet away a horse and rider of fire.

There was no doubt of it, for all saw the horse, and he seemed to be on fire, and all beheld the rider seated on his back without bridle or saddle, and wildly waving his arms, while in one hand he held a huge knife.

The rider was clad in the skins of wild beasts, and wore a red sash about his head.

Both horse and rider were of great size, and there they stood upon the cliff with the flames all around them, and seeming to have leaped up out of a fiery furnace.

For some time the fiery forms were visible, then they disappeared in the darkness, after flashes of flame, and all was blackness.

At last a vivid flash of lightning revealed the cliff, but the horse and rider were gone.

The next morning the band started for their village at the first peep of day.

They had seen the Evil, or Fire Spirit, and never wished to hunt in those mountains again.

Their camp on their way back at night, was not far from their village, and suddenly, when all were asleep, and it was very dark, there dashed through their midst the Fire Spirit, riding like the wind and shrieking wildly.

Many braves said that they had fired at him, but no shot touched him, and yet the next morning it was found that the Indian sentinels were dead on their posts, their heads severed from their bodies.

Since then many had seen the Fire Spirit, and each time braves had been slain.

Now not a brave could be found who would fire upon the wild horse and rider, and the Indians feared him as they did the Evil Spirit from Hades.

The band that had just come in had seen him the night before, and two of their number had fallen at his hands.

Such was the story of the Fire Spirit of the Mountains, and the Surgeon Scout had listened to it with the deepest attention, and then said to himself:

"It is the Mad Marauder of the Mines, or the Deadly Hand Demon, as the scouts at the fort call him.

"That is the man I want to meet."

CHAPTER L.

LITTLE GIRL SOLDIER'S WARNING.

A MONTH passed by and Surgeon Powell began to make his arrangements for leaving the Indian camp.

He had seen all of the wounded he had cared for up and about save War Eagle, and the young chief would, in another week, be able to be out and need no care.

The head chief was no longer limping around, and in every way he was much im-

proved by the treatment he had received by the pale-face medicine-man.

The sick had been cared for, the injured patched up, and Doctor Powell had made a name for himself which he had richly deserved, of being a magic medicine-man, and he was popular with all, save a few of the young medicines of the late Red Lightning's band who had not forgiven his killing their chief and were envious of his skill as a healer and surgeon.

These few still cast dark glances at the White Beaver when they were near him, and he was not long in discovering that they would bear watching.

Many of the Indians, thankful for his kindness to them, and the services he had rendered, insisted upon his acceptance of presents from them.

A few gave him lassoes, others horse-hair bridles, a number, the finest of dressed deer, bear, buffalo and otter skins.

Red Bird made for him a suit of the finest buckskin beaded and embroidered, and moccasins.

He was also given pipes, belts, moccasins, and no end of other things until he knew that it would take a couple of pack-horses to carry his gifts, and as though realizing this difficulty, Death Fighter had presented him with a splendid pony, and War Eagle had also given him another.

He had talked with the two chiefs much about the bitter feeling between his people and theirs, and told them that the pale-faces were glad to bury the hatchet forever if the Indians would only do so.

But just here was where the Indians got in the pith of their argument in their behalf, that the white man wanted their lands, and hence they were driven again and again from the graves of their kindred and further toward the land of the setting sun.

With the White Beaver they would be friends, but not with his people as long as they came with the pipe of peace in one hand and the gun in the other.

Another week passed by and War Eagle was able to leave his tepee and walk about.

He had had a very close call and he knew well that the skill and devoted care of White Beaver had alone saved his life.

"The War Eagle is well, and now I must return to my people; but my red brothers will soon see me again, for I shall come back to their village within another moon, and show that I have not forgotten their kindness to me," said the White Beaver.

All the village soon knew that within another day White Beaver would leave them.

Though their friend, he went to rejoin his people, but yet he gave his word to soon return to visit them.

He had studied their habits closely while in their camp, had picked up their language wonderfully, and spoke it well, and he felt that his stay there of nearly six weeks had done him a world of good in many ways, while it certainly had interested and instructed him in red-skin ailments and practice.

He had gotten his traps and gifts all together, and found that he had two well-filled pack-saddles, and, with the two ponies given him, he had an extra riding-horse as well.

All was ready for an early start, and he sat talking to War Eagle after sunset, until he told him he must go into his tepee out of the night-air.

Then he bade him farewell and walked over to the tepee of Death Fighter.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and as he approached the tepee he saw Red Bird coming toward him.

She led him in silence back toward the cliffs and then halting beneath a tree said sadly:

"The White Beaver leaves our village in the morning?"

"Yes, Little Girl Soldier, I leave with the light, and have come to say good-by."

"The Little White Soldier would warn White Beaver of danger?"

"What danger?"

"The Medicine Chief Mad Dog and fourteen of his braves left the village yesterday for a hunt over toward the pale-faces' fort."

"The Mad Dog and his braves were the friends of Red Lightning, and they do not like White Beaver."

"They may meet him on the trail."

"I shall be on the watch for them, and I thank the Little Girl Soldier."

The girl was silent a moment, she glanced up into the face of White Beaver and then hung her head, while she said in a low tone:

"The Little Girl Soldier has warned the White Beaver."

CHAPTER LI.

AN INDIAN GIRL'S LOVE.

THERE was something in the way that Red Bird uttered the words of warning that caused Surgeon Powell to regard her closely.

He again thanked her, and told her he would heed her warning, and it would doubtless save his life, for he had seen that the Mad Dog did not like him, but did not know that he had left the village.

Then there was another silence, and it was growing painful to the doctor, when Red Bird glanced quickly up into his face and said earnestly, as she placed a hand upon either shoulder:

"The White Beaver saved the life of the Red Bird, and he called her Little Girl Soldier."

"See! the cut the Killer gave her is healed, but the wound in her heart will never heal, for she loves the white Beaver."

"He saved the life of the War Eagle, whom she loved until she saw the great White Medicine Chief."

"Then her heart felt its wound and suffered pain."

"She can never love the War Eagle; she will never be his wife, for she loves the White Beaver."

"Her heart is his, and he will take it away with him, and the Little Girl Soldier will have no heart, for the White Beaver does not give his to her in return."

"She has eyes, and sees that he does not love her, that he loves some pale-face maiden of his own race."

"It is well, and if he is happy, Little Girl Soldier is glad, for she loves the pale-face chief."

"He will come again, but he will not see the Red Bird, for her song will have ended, and he must look for her grave, for she cannot live without a heart—she must go to the Great Spirit and roam through the happy hunting-grounds."

"If the White Beaver loved her, she would be happy, she would not wish to die, and the Red Bird would sing with joy."

"But the Red Bird can sing no more."

She had spoken with a depth of passionate feeling that showed that her words were true.

What she said had pained Surgeon Powell deeply, far more than she could think, and she glanced up into his face as she ceased speaking with a pleading, timid look, as though appealing for him to tell her that he loved her, that the Red Bird must still sing songs of joy, the Little Girl Soldier still live and gladden the hearts of her old father and her people.

He took her hands in his and looked down upon her face as the moonlight shone upon it and said, and his voice showed that he was moved:

"The Red Bird must continue to sing, for she will love the War Eagle when White Beaver is gone."

"He is of her race, and a great chief; the White Beaver belongs to a race that are foes of her people."

"She must think of him only as she would a brother, and she will be happy."

"Come now, and we will go to the tepee and see the Death Fighter."

She did not utter a word, but walked with him to the tepee in which the old chief sat smoking his pipe.

He received White Beaver in a most kindly way, and told him how sorry he was to have him go.

"But the White Beaver will return, and when he comes again the Little Girl Soldier will become the wife of the War Eagle."

A quick glance at Red Bird showed no sign to Surgeon Powell that she had even heard the words.

After a smoke with the old chief White Beaver arose, bade him farewell, and with a warm grasp of Red Bird's hand took his departure.

Red Bird uttered not a word, but her

hands were cold, though her face showed no emotions.

She was an Indian and she would not betray what she suffered.

She stepped out of the tepee into the moonlight and watched the retreating form of the man she had learned to love with all the ardor of her nature, and kept her eyes fixed upon him until he disappeared in the distance down toward the river.

The words of the Indian girl impressed Frank Powell unpleasantly.

He knew that she felt keenly, and yet he hoped that she would soon return to her old lover when he was gone and she could thus be off with the new love.

It was not day when he arose, and leaving his tepee he found two braves whose wounds he had cared for, ready to aid him get his horses ready.

When the saddles were put on he mounted, bade them good-by and was riding away in the early dawn, when a party of mounted braves came up.

They were from War Eagle's band and were going by their chief's orders, to escort him.

They left him soon after sunrise, and as he went on alone he suddenly came upon a mounted warrior whom at a glance he recognized.

It was One Arm Killer, who had been made a sub-chief.

He held out his hand as the Surgeon Scout came up and said:

"The Mad Dog and some of his braves left on a hunt two nights ago.

"The Mad Dog took this trail.

"He does not love the White Beaver.

"The One Arm Killer has his band of young braves near and he will go with the White Beaver."

But this kindness on the part of the Indian Surgeon Powell would not bear to, and promising that he would take a different trail, he bade the One Arm Killer good-by and went on his way, shaping his course to the northward so as to avoid his foes, should they be in his path, and which he now felt confident of, for twice had the warning given him added to his own suspicions of the treachery of Mad Dog toward him.

CHAPTER LII.

A GANTLET TO RUN.

WHEN Surgeon Powell rode on, after leaving One Arm Killer, he began to think very seriously of the two warnings he had received.

Red Bird certainly had seen enough to cause her to feel that Mad Dog intended some treacherous act, and One Arm would not have warned him of danger had he not suspected that he might be ambushed.

It was true that he was the acknowledged friend of the Indians; but Mad Dog and his following were still hostile to him, and in an ugly humor at his having killed their chief.

Not knowing that they were suspected by Red Bird and others, they could go off on a pretended hunt, ambush the White Beaver, and then return with plenty of game, pretending not to have seen him.

These things all considered, Doctor Powell began to think seriously over the possibility of running into a danger there was no escape from.

Mad Dog had fourteen braves with him, he had been told.

They were too many for one man to think of facing.

So far he had seen no trail of where the Indians had passed along.

If he could discover their trail, he would have accomplished much.

To do this he at once wheeled to the left, and began to go by as straight a line as the nature of the ground would permit, to the southward.

He was sure that they had not gone to the northward further than he then was.

After a ride of half a dozen miles, in which he had crossed several trails leading to the lower country, but none the one he sought, he halted suddenly.

There was a trail before him, and it came from the Indian village.

It was about thirty-six hours old, and it was made by a score of ponies.

As they were presumably going hunting, they would carry extra ponies for game and in case of accident.

That must be Mad Dog's trail, and the Surgeon Scout determined to follow it.

It did not exactly go as he would have gone, but then it might soon change its course.

This it did.

It bore to the northward again.

After a ride of some miles it came into the main trail, the very one he was expected to follow going to the fort.

Further on it divided.

Three horses had branched off to the right.

Soon after three more had branched off to the left.

An hour's longer ride revealed the fact that the trail had divided into five.

"That will leave three warriors to each trail, counting the extra horses.

"I remember that there were said to be just five passes through yonder mountain range, all of them within a few miles of each other, and then on either side for many a mile there is none.

"There is no doubt but that Mad Dog intends to be on the safe side and guard each one of the passes.

"This means three braves to a pass.

"That is not so bad.

"Yes, I think I can risk that, and I'll pray diligently to hit the one where Mad Dog will make one of the guards.

"That, by my reasoning would be the middle one, to be near his warriors on each side when my scalp is called in.

"Well, Mr. Mad Dog, it is now a game for life and death between us.

"Had I not been warned, you might have won; but, forewarned, I am forearmed, and may the best man win."

So mused the Surgeon Scout, and he took the trail for the middle pass.

By easy riding he could reach there before nightfall; but, if he was late, the Indians would wait for him, and they would doubtless be on the watch through the night.

"It will be in the gloaming when I reach the pass," he muttered with a grim smile curling about his stern mouth.

The mountain range rose ahead of him some miles, and nearer to it he saw that there was timber on the foot-hills, while just where he then was the country was open, and he did not doubt but that his approach would be seen a long way off by the Indians.

When the Surgeon Scout reached the foot-hills the trail led through heavy timber, and he kept his gaze constantly ahead.

There were rocks here and there, but he gave them a wide berth, and had his rifle ready for instant use when needed.

The trail of those who had gone on ahead showed but three horses, this leading the doctor to feel that the chief was with that party, he not caring to be bothered with the extra ponies.

As he neared the range Frank Powell became more cautious than ever, and at last decided to halt.

This he did in a place where he would not be seen, should the Indians be near.

Halting his horses he at once dismounted and began to carry out his plan of action.

He was about a mile from the pass, he decided, and starting on his way again in half an hour he would reach there when it was dark, or rather in the twilight.

The moon in its second quarter would give light enough for him to see to act he felt assured.

The plan of the Surgeon Scout was to trap the Indians as he had Demon Dick.

He had worn his white beaver robe and war-bonnet away from the village, in honor of the Indians, and had, deciding upon what he would do, stuck to them all day.

These gave him a good chance to hide a dummy form beneath and he at once began to make one from the contents of his pack.

An extra pair of boots, a pair of pants stuffed, with a blanket roll made up the form, and a head was ingeniously made and the war-bonnet put on it.

Then the white beaver robe was thrown over it, and the form was fastened in the saddle, yet only with a light string, with a rope attached, and a quick jerk would dismount the dummy.

His own horses, Rattler and Runaway, he could thoroughly depend upon, and one of these was placed in advance with the dummy, and he had a pack-horse, one of the Indian ponies, alongside.

The other horse and pony followed close behind, and the four were tied together securely.

CHAPTER LIII.

TAKING THE CHANCES.

WHEN his plan was all arranged, and he was ready to continue on his way, the Surgeon Scout, swung his rifle at his back and loosened his revolvers in their holsters.

He had found the two ponies given him to be splendid animals.

They were spirited yet kind, fleet, sure-footed and could endure the hardest work he was sure.

With one by the side of Runaway in the lead, and the other alongside of Rattler, they drove like four-in-hand.

Starting them upon the trail just as twilight began to cast its mellow halo over all, the Surgeon Scout followed close behind the heels of Rattler, who he knew would not kick him, where he was not so sure of the Indian ponies, gentle as they appeared to be.

As he neared the rocky gap in the range the twilight faded into moonlight, the moon shining brightly upon him, broken only here and there in passing a tree by the side of the trail.

The Surgeon Scout then forced himself in between the two rear horses, bending his form so as not to appear above the pack-saddle on the pony and back of Rattler.

Nearer and nearer he drew to the gap and not once did the thought enter his mind that his foes were not there.

The warning of Red Bird, then of One Arm Killer, the big trail he had come upon, then its dividing into five smaller ones each leading to one of the five passes the Indians had told him were in the range at that point, convinced him, in addition to Mad Dog's enmity toward him, that his foes were lying in wait for him.

He was within a hundred yards of the gap, and his eyes were trying to penetrate the darkness there.

He had unslung his rifle and held it cocked and ready.

Nearer and nearer he drew to the gap, the opening of which he could see revealed against the sky, and, just as he was about to enter the shadows of the overhanging rocks, yet while the moonlight still shone upon him, there came the flashes of three rifles.

One was fired from directly in front, a second from the left of the gap, the third from the right, but those in ambush were not fifty feet apart, and not twice that distance from the one they fired upon.

The horses gave a slight bound, snorts of alarm, and came to a halt, while the white-robed form in the saddle fell to the ground.

Then were heard three exultant yells and as many savages sprung into view in the bright moonlight, bounding forward to behold their victim.

But, ere they reached the horses, which had become uneasy at their approach and were huddled together, over the back of Runaway was thrust a rifle and rapidly one, two, three shots rung out, and the trio of treacherous red-skins went down on their faces.

With a word to quiet his horses the Surgeon Scout stepped forward, after picking up the fallen dummy, with its white robe and gorgeous war-bonnet trailing in the dust, and approached the three Indians.

There was no need of his showing any dread, for he never missed, and he had fired to kill.

He knew, without looking, that there was a bullet in the brain of each of the three red-skins.

But, as he drew near them his keen hearing detected the rapid clatter of hoofs.

With his horses all huddled together, and tangled with the lariats, to mount and fly was impossible, and so he determined to hold his position.

He would lead his horses among the rocks, and stand at bay, for he supposed that some of the rest of Mad Dog's band was upon him.

Then his ears detected that there were a number of horses coming.

They were coming, too, not from right or left along the base of the range, but upon his trail.

He soon had his horses in shelter, and with a group of rocks for a fort stood ready to face whoever might appear.

A moment more they dashed into view, and his glass was quickly turned upon them.

It was as quickly lowered, for he recognized the two riding in front.

They were Little Girl Soldier and One Arm Killer.

Instantly he stepped out of his hiding-place, and reached the spot where the three dead red skins lay just as the party dashed up, for One Arm Killer's band of braves followed the leaders.

"The Little Girl Soldier rides far from her village," and the Surgeon Scout stepped forward to greet her.

"The Little Girl Soldier came to save the life of the White Beaver; but he has no need of her aid and that of the One Arm Killer," and the Indian girl seemed almost disappointed.

"I heeded the warning of the Little Girl Soldier, and of the One Arm, and guarded against the strike of a snake in the grass.

"I saw the trails divide, and they went to each of the passes.

"I came to this one.

"See, their bullets cut through the robe the Great Death Fighter gave me, but it was not about my form.

"They fired, and then the White Beaver killed them."

They had heard the volley of shots, then the three in quick succession, the Red Bird said.

She had grown anxious after the White Beaver left, and riding out had met the One Arm and he had told her of his fears, and they had come on together to defend him.

"Let the White Beaver take the scalps of the coward Sioux," cried One Arm Killer, indignantly.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FLYING HORSEMAN.

WHITE BEAVER, as he is even to-day known by the Indians, did not take One Arm Killer at his word, as regarded the scalps of Mad Dog and his braves.

Instead he said:

"No, the White Beaver will not take the scalps of his foes.

"The One Arm can bear the bodies back to the village and bury them, and the White Beaver asks that the rest of the Mad Dog's braves be not punished.

"He will now say good-by and go on his way; but he thanks the Little Girl Soldier and the One Arm for coming to his aid."

The Red Bird uttered no word.

She had been assured after meeting One Arm that Mad Dog and his braves intended to waylay and kill the white chief, and she at once started on to his aid, riding hard to overtake him, for he had hours, start of her.

She had hoped to arrive in time to prevent the Surgeon Scout from running into an ambush, and then her intention was to go on, catch Mad Dog in his treachery and take him back a prisoner to the village for her father to deal with.

But, in her heart had come the hope that if she did save the white chief, it would cause him to love her.

She had met with disappointment, for he had protected himself, and she was silent.

Having sent word to her father where she had gone, as they were a long way from the village, and the other braves of the Mad Dog were to be brought in by One Arm's warriors, the Indian band went into camp there, for there was a brook near and grass for the ponies.

But Surgeon Powell decided that he would not camp there, but push on, and with an aching heart the Indian girl again took leave of him, and saw him mount and ride on his way.

With stern face and thoughts that were by no means in a happy vein, Surgeon Powell rode on his way once more.

He passed through the gap and then de-

scended the range on the other side, the moonlight guiding him.

After a couple of hours' ride he came to a small, rock-bound valley, which the trail crossed.

The grass grew luxuriantly there, a crystal stream flowed swiftly along, and there was wood in plenty.

He had no dread there of a foe, so halted, staked out his horses, built a fire and cooked his supper.

Then, after a smoke he spread his blankets and lay down to sleep, knowing well that both Rattler and Runaway would give him warning of any danger.

He had been asleep about an hour when both Runaway and Rattler gave a sharp neigh, and the Indian ponies snorted wildly.

Instantly he was on his feet, rifle in hand, while, down the valley, a couple of hundred yards away, a horseman was visible riding like the wind.

He rode a snow-white horse, and both animal and rider seemed of great size.

Quickly seizing his glass the Surgeon Scout turned it upon the horseman, and from his lips broke the words:

"The Merciless Marauder, by all that's holy!"

He dropped his glass, threw his rifle to his shoulder, but there was no report.

He pulled trigger again, and again the click, yet no report.

And so sounded the click, click, every time he pulled trigger, until the Mad Marauder swept on out of range down the valley in the moonlight.

"My God! that man does bear, as they say, a charmed life, for every shot played me false.

"It was the first time my rifle ever failed me, and I do not understand it."

The Surgeon Scout did not retire again to his blankets for some time.

He turned his glass far down the valley, and he saw indistinctly the Mad Marauder flying along.

Had he seen his camp, and horses? He judged not.

Had he done so he would have attacked him, for the Deadly Hand Demon's mission was to kill, for such was the name he bore.

How thoroughly at his mercy the Surgeon Scout felt he would have been, with every charge in his rifle missing fire.

It was true that he could have used his revolvers, and yet he would still have kept his rifle up with the hope of the next shot going off.

He then sat down and began to look at the rifle.

The charges were there, but they had played him false.

His first duty was to take them out and reload.

Then he retired again to his blankets, determined to take the trail of the Mad Marauder in the morning.

But when he awoke a rain had set in, and soon, as it increased, the trail was destroyed, so he held on his way to Fort M— as was his intention before leaving the Deadly Hand cross his path.

CHAPTER LV.

THE RETURN.

THERE was considerable anxiety felt at Fort M— regarding the Surgeon Scout.

When Lieutenant Percy Hammond had reported that he had gone off on a secret mission of some kind, which led him up into the Indian country, the colonel appeared to dread the worst, well as he knew how thoroughly able Frank Powell was to take care of himself.

He did not understand what could have taken the surgeon up to the Indian country and alone.

If he had left the fort on his trail of revenge against those who had wronged him, that mission seemed to have been accomplished, then why continue on into still greater danger.

The lieutenant had been gone but a few days when the colonel moved out two-thirds of his force, as though on a raid against the Indians.

The other forts did the same, along the whole frontier line, and the scouts of the Indian tribes were not long in reporting

that the soldiers were preparing to attack them.

Up in the village of Death Fighter the news soon came and there was a general alarm, far as it was situated from the fort, and hard as it would be to attack the Sioux in their stronghold.

Surgeon Powell at once told the chiefs that it was a move caused by the movements of other tribes that had made a hostile demonstration, and that the soldiers would not then come there.

This allayed their fears, and soon after they discovered that the move against them had been only a feint.

What it meant they did not know, and yet Surgeon Powell did, for he had learned of the intended advance from Lieutenant Hammond.

Had the soldiers really advanced to the attack, then, it would have placed Surgeon Powell in a false light, and much of his influence and the trust in him would have been gone.

But he knew too well that Colonel Merrill had not troops enough to send upon a regular attack of the Indian stronghold, and that it would have demanded the soldiers from the various forts all combined to have done so.

For ten days the soldiers raided about, but they never came within fifty miles of the Indian village, and so they did not prove the Surgeon Scout a false prophet.

After the return of the troops more anxiety than before had been felt for the Surgeon Scout.

Cavalry companies had made dashes into and about the Indian country, the scouts had penetrated within a short distance of the stronghold, and the body of the Killer had been found torn to pieces by wolves.

The scouts saw that *travois* had been made there, and something had occurred of a tragic nature.

The trail of the band that had fought the Surgeon Scout's party at the hill had been taken and tracked to where it joined the one under the Chief War Eagle in his pursuit of the Killer with Red Bird.

The scouts read these signs as well as they could, and they made out of it, as they had followed the trail of the Surgeon Scout to the spot where he had rescued the Indian girl, that he had been killed or captured there.

This was all reported to Colonel Merrill upon their return, and by all the garrison the deepest anxiety was felt for the safety of Surgeon Powell.

His resignation having been accepted through the various channels it had to go to reach headquarters, though in each case with most complimentary words of regret, there was no longer any need of secrecy in the matter of the Surgeon Scout's having resigned to take a trail as a Nemesis.

So the story got out, and as the weeks went by it gradually became the general opinion that the brave man had himself met a tragic end.

So worked up over his fate was Colonel Merrill, that he at last decided that he would send out a band of scouts under Texas Jack, to endeavor to capture a Sioux Indian and try and learn from him if the Surgeon Scout had been killed or was a prisoner.

He had given the orders for the scouts to start the next morning, just two months after the Surgeon Scout had left the fort, and they were to go fifteen strong and be all picked men and horses, remaining until in some way they had made prisoners of several Sioux.

But while Texas Jack was getting his men ready for the start on the morrow, the sentinel reported some one approaching the fort.

It was soon seen to be one horseman, with two pack animals and an extra riding horse.

He was approaching on the trail coming from the Indian country, and jogging along at an easy pace.

As he drew nearer the sentinel called out that it was an Indian.

Then classes were turned upon the solitary horseman, and several officers said at once:

"Yes, it is an Indian, and a big chief, for he wears a most gorgeous war-bonnet, and a white robe.

"He must be on some important mission."

Nearer and nearer he came until Texas Jack called out:

"He is riding Surgeon Frank Powell's horse Rattler, and his other horse, Runaway, is following."

"That means that Powell is a prisoner," sadly said an officer.

"No, sir, it means that he is the one riding that horse, for I recognize the surgeon in spite of his Indian togs," cried Texas Jack.

Ten minutes after the horseman rode up to the stockade, and cheer after cheer greeted him as Frank Powell was recognized in the costume of an Indian chief.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE STORY TOLD.

THE cheers followed Frank Powell as he rode on to his old quarters, which an officer told him were just as he had left them.

He was greeted again and again with congratulations upon his return, and when he dismounted at the door of his quarters, and his old striker came forward to serve him again, he was seen in the white beaver robe and gorgeous war-bonnet, and looked, as an officer expressed it:

"Like an Indian king."

As soon as he had made his toilet and had supper he went to report to Colonel Merrill, and a warm welcome indeed did he receive from that officer.

The colonel shook his hand again and again and said:

"Well, Powell, I was going to send a search party after you in the morning, for Texas Jack was going with fourteen scouts to capture a red-skin and learn if you had been taken prisoner or killed."

"We knew that in either case his joy would not let him keep the secret."

"But where on earth have you been?"

"Up in the Indian country, colonel."

"Did you see any Indians?"

"Did I see any Indians, sir? well, yes, sir, for I am a big Injun myself, having been pow-wow'd, ordained and snatched into the fold of red-skins as Chief White Beaver, and I wear a robe worth its weight in gold, sir, for it is made solely of white beaver-skins."

"Anything you wish to know, sir, about Indians I can tell you, for I'm right in it, colonel, with old Death Fighter's whole outfit."

"What in heaven's name have you been doing there, Powell?" asked the colonel, smiling at the Surgeon Scout's story of his being initiated as an Indian.

"Practicing surgery and medicine, sir."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, sir, I do, and there is almost as good a field for surgery among the heathen as there is among the Christian dwellers in the mining camps, only the reds do not fight among themselves, but get wounded by pale-faces and receive injuries of various kinds."

"Some of the wounds I was doctoring I made myself; but I developed into a veritable Good Samaritan, colonel, and became the leading physician of Death Fighter's village."

"And that old red Satan did not kill you?"

"Not he, sir, and he is a very respectable old Indian gentleman I assure you, sir."

"I extracted a bullet from his leg and it got well quickly after giving him trouble for years."

"Powell, I really do not understand how you got back here with your scalp."

"My scalp is all right, sir, as you see; but I will give you the whole story, Colonel Merrill."

"You saw Lieutenant Hammond though, sir?" and the light manner of the Surgeon Scout at once changed.

"Yes, and he told me all."

"I am glad that he did, sir, for I will not have to do so, and I am anxious to let the past go into the grave of forgetfulness, only upon my honor, Colonel Merrill, you would not blame me did you know how those men had wronged me and those I love."

"As their crimes have been avenged so let it rest."

"It is better so, Powell, and your course in resigning your commission was most honorable."

"Still I believe you can be reappointed."

"No, colonel, I will rove about the border for awhile, and then seek a home elsewhere, and practice my profession, to which I am devoted."

Then, once more assuming his light manner, he continued:

"I was in the Indian village when you made the advance along the line, sir, and the red-skins were considerably worked up, though, colonel, unless taken by a complete surprise at night, you would have to send three thousand soldiers to capture that Indian stronghold."

"There is a range to pass through, and then a valley, which no one could cross without being seen from the further range."

"Up in the latter, reached only by two narrow passes, is a large valley through which a river runs."

"It has numerous canyons in the cliff, and is surrounded by a natural barrier."

"There are all of eighteen hundred fighters in the village, and even the squaws and children could defend the passes with stones."

"They have plenty of cattle they have stolen, sheep, and cultivate corn and vegetables, while they are all well armed and have thousands of ponies."

"The tribe is a large one, warlike, dangerous and rich, and it would be better to be at peace with them than war, for they are capable of doing much damage."

"Old Death Fighter, their great medicine-man, is head chief, with War Eagle as the field commander, and both are brave, cunning, intelligent and able commanders."

"You certainly have gained a complete history of them, Powell."

"You forget that I told you that I was a big chief; in fact, colonel, White Beaver, the Magic Medicine-Man, as they have named me, holds power second only to that of Death Fighter and War Eagle."

"How did you manage all this, Frank Powell?" said the colonel, eagerly.

"I will tell you, sir, the whole story from Alpha to Omega."

And so the story was told, just as the reader knows it, from the saving of Red Bird's life, up to the seeing the Mad Marauder dash by his camp on the return trail.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE SECRET MISSION.

COLONEL MERRILL was silent for several minutes, after he had heard the story of the Surgeon Scout.

He sat in deep meditation, and at last said, after he had conned it all over:

"Well, Powell, you are the most remarkable man, and phenomenal one for luck I ever knew."

"The Destiny that guides your ends, seems to be thoroughly subject to your own will."

"You left here two months ago to-day, and soon after killed that outlaw desperado, Buck Bolton the gambler, then next came Demon Dick, and quickly following your foes of your triple duel."

"Meeting Paxton you became friends, and were thus able to beat off the red-skins and rescue Lieutenant Hammond, Rexford, the girl miner and old Grizzly Jim."

"You set them on the right trail to safety, play a lone hand, and arrive on the scene just in time to wipe out the Indian chief kidnapper, rescue the Indian beauty Red Bird, save her lover the War Eagle, practice on the wounded braves, cut a bullet out of old Death Fighter's leg, kill in a knife duel the Medicine Chief Red Lightning, get made a big chief yourself, were made rich with red-skin presents, got two warnings of danger, wiped out Mad Dog and his two braves, then escaped being murdered by Deadly Hand the Demon Marauder, and turn up smiling here in the fort."

"I say, Frank Powell, you are a wonder, and you have my warmest congratulations."

"Now what is your next move?"

The colonel gazed at the Surgeon Scout with a smile.

He had given a hasty review of his adventures, and was now anxious to know just what he meant to do next.

From what he knew of Frank Powell he was very certain that as he had made no mention thus far of the mission he had gone on, he would yet broach that subject.

"Colonel Merrill," began Surgeon Powell thoughtfully:

"To, tell you what my next move is to be,

I must inform you just why I went up into the Indian country."

"Your doing so and taking such desperate chances, Powell, was a mystery to me."

"As it was, sir, it turned out all right."

"I did not go there with any desire to see the red-skins and make their intimate acquaintance, for I was not sure just how that could be done."

"Accident, or luck, helped me, and I saw them."

"I should think so," dryly said the colonel.

"Now, I told you of having seen the Mad Marauder dash by my camp, after leaving the Indian village?"

"Yes."

"That man has, for a long time, colonel, been a terror on this border."

"He most certainly has."

"I believed the idea of the Indians being afraid of him, was all pretense, but now I am convinced to the contrary for they do fear him as much as soldiers do the devil."

"He is as cruelly their foe as he is of the whites, and so I am better acquainted with him and his motives."

"I must tell you of Lieutenant Hammond's adventure with him on his way here from Bed Rock City."

"Ahl the lieutenant saw him, then, sir?"

"Yes, as did Rexford and Grizzly Jim," and the colonel told the story.

"Well, sir, that proves he is most merciless to all, his killing those two men, one of whom you say that Hammond thought knew him?"

"Yes, he felt confident that he did."

"My reason for my last trip, colonel, was to run down the Mad Marauder."

"Hah! can this be possible?" and the colonel showed his surprise.

"Yes, sir, for I was up in the Indian country, I had accomplished my errand of revenge, and the thought came to me to carry out the intention that had often occurred to me, to hunt that man down, and so I started upon the trail to bring up in the Indian village."

"I was not just fitted out as I wished to be to go after the Mad Marauder, but I concluded I would take the chances."

"Having become friendly with the Indians, having learned from them that the Mad Demon was really their foe, I decided to return to the fort and fit out expressly for a man-hunt, a hunt that would run down that fiend, or get me wiped out, for I am more than willing to take the chances."

"But you have some motive in this, Powell?"

"Yes, sir, I have a motive in carrying out this mission, which I have vowed to accomplish," was the earnest response of the Surgeon Scout.

CHAPTER LVIII.

WHITE BEAVER'S RESOLVE.

"WILL you make known to me your motive, Doctor Powell, in hunting this man down, or is it a secret?" asked Colonel Merrill.

"No, sir, it is not a secret now, and I will tell you."

"In the first place, he has been a terror for years. His name is used to frighten bad children in the settlements, and the settlers are just as much afraid of him as are the children."

"In the mines he is greatly feared, and the soldiers and Indians also dread him."

"Who or what he is no one seems to know, and yet he has struck his deadly blows upon the settlements, in the mining-camps, against the red skins, and even here at the fort he has been seen to come to its very gates."

"He dresses in skins like a wild beast, save a flaming red scarf he wears about his head, and carries two large revolvers and a knife that is like a broadsword."

"He rides without saddle or bridle, and his horse is the fleetest animal on this border by long odds, from all accounts."

"Then he holds up emigrant trains, travelers, lone gold-hunters, trappers or scouts, and shows no mercy, for he is a fiend in nature, and appears to love to kill."

"These are the motives for ridding the country of him, as one would of a dangerous wild beast."

"But you have another motive?"

"I have, sir."

"I hope you will tell me."

"I will, sir."

"Mind you, this is no idle curiosity, Powell, on my part; but you have accomplished so much that, having set your heart upon running down this inhuman wild rider, I believe you will at least make the attempt, and I wish to know all that there is in your favor and against you."

"Of course you will take a good force with you?"

"On the contrary, colonel, I shall go alone."

The colonel shook his head.

"You see, sir, I can go on a better hunt alone than with others, and I am going to find that man."

"But to explain my other motive, sir."

"Yes."

"Some years ago I had a dear friend who came into this part of the country as a gold-hunter."

"He was sure of finding a fortune, and having been a prospector in California, and a frontiersman in Texas, he was chosen captain of the outfit, there being eight others besides himself."

"They had their pack-horses loaded heavily with all they would need, were all splendidly armed and prepared for a year's stay, if necessary."

"All of them brave fellows, they little dreaded the Indians, and pushed boldly into their country."

"A very foolhardy thing to do."

"Yes, sir, especially at that time; but they all had the gold-fever, one of their number had been a prisoner to the Indians, and he had heard the red-skins talk of gold in large quantities in the mountains near their village."

"So they pushed on and were never heard of afterward."

"I remember the circumstance now."

"They were, I felt sure, massacred by Indians, and I felt revengeful toward the red-skins for killing my friend."

"But this I know now was not the case, for the Indians did not harm them."

"Is this so?"

"It is, sir."

"Then can they be in the mountains yet hunting for gold?"

"No, sir, they are dead, I am sure."

"The Indians did intend to kill them, for old Death Fighter led a band to the mountains to massacre them; but they were not found, their trail was lost where they had crossed a stream, or gone into it from its cliff banks, and they were not seen afterward."

"The Indians camped in the mountains for days trying to find some trace of them, but in vain."

"That is remarkable."

"It is, sir, when their mysterious disappearance and hiding of their trail is considered."

"What do you think became of them?"

"Well, colonel, old Death Fighter told me a strange story of what they saw when they were hunting for the party."

"A storm came up at night, and the thunder and lightning were terrible to hear and see."

"In the midst of it the Indians in their camp heard a demoniacal yell and they beheld on the point of a cliff a horse and rider."

"The animal was snow-white, the rider dressed in skins, and a circle of fire was about them."

"Soon they disappeared, and later the Mad Marauder, for he it was, dashed through their camps all aflame, they averred."

"That was conjured up by their fears."

"Well, no, sir, for a man with red and blue fire, powder and matches, could appear to be on fire, while phosphorus rubbed on horse and rider would give them a wild light."

"You then think that the fiery ordeal was gotten up for a purpose?"

"I do, sir, simply to frighten the Indians."

"It may be so."

"I talked with the Indians who saw both the band of gold-hunters and the Fire Spirit, as they called the one they beheld on their cliff and dash through their camp."

"What did they say?"

"They said, sir, that the gold-hunters had with them a man of giant size, and he rode a very large black mare that had a snow-white colt trotting by her side."

"Now, this Mad Marauder is a man, almost a giant in size, and he has been seen to ride a very large, black animal, but never going at such terrific speed when doing so, as when mounted upon a snow-white horse."

"Aha!"

"Those gold-hunters disappeared nearly eight years ago, and the very mountain range where they were last seen is the spot where this Mad Marauder has his home."

"Putting all of these together, I believe, colonel, that the Mad Marauder may be the giant of the gold-hunter party who rode the large, black mare with the white colt, and the loss of his comrades in some mysterious way may have crazed him and made him the demon that he is."

"By the gods of war, Powell, but I believe you are on the right trail about this after all, and if he is crazed, he is to be pitied, not condemned, poor fellow, for no one knows what he has suffered."

"So I say, sir, and it is now my intention to rest for a few days, then fit out as I wish, and go upon his trail to capture him alive or dead."

CHAPTER LIX.

THE START ON A DEADLY TRAIL.

"I am perfectly willing, Doctor Powell, for you to start on this deadly trail, for such it will be, but not alone," said the colonel.

"I said, sir, I would take him dead or alive, and that may seem harsh, as he may be mad, crazed by what he has seen and suffered; but then he is one who had better be dead if mad, and his deeds of blood must not be allowed to continue, for he will keep them up for years perhaps."

"You cannot find an Indian who will fire upon him, and as for the settlers and miners, they believe he has a charmed life and fear to shoot at him."

"The soldiers even have a superstitious dread of him, and the scouts shun him now."

"My idea is to find his trail, track him to his haunt, and, if possible, take him alive."

"If that cannot be done, I will have to kill him, and must take very good care that he does not kill me."

"Well, Powell, as I said, I am willing for you to go, but not alone."

"Yes, sir, I must go alone or not at all."

"You know, colonel, that he has never been known to fire upon a soldier."

"That is so."

"I therefore desire, sir, to carry along my full-dress uniform, and wear it constantly as a protection."

"He cannot mistake that, and if he really has any reason for not killing a soldier, it will protect me, should he lie in ambush for me."

"Once I can see him, I will stick to his trail."

"Both Rattler and Runaway have a phenomenal speed, though they cannot run with that white horse of his, yet I may be so lucky as to catch him on his black, which, if he rode as a gold-hunter, is getting old now."

"I have two fine Indian ponies with me that are as fleet as deer, can climb a mountain and descend one like a goat, and I will carry my packs on them, just as I came in, and I will be well mounted then, sir, and prepared to give chase or run away."

"There is not much of the run away from danger in your make-up, Doctor Powell."

"I should be wretched if there was, sir."

"I wish to go prepared with an outfit for all kinds of work and weather, extra weapons, and provisions enough to last me for months, if I have to stay so long."

"And when do you wish to go?"

"Within a week I shall start, sir, and I will go first back to the Indian village, for I wish to carry War Eagle a fine horse, saddle and bridle, and a belt of arms, with other presents."

"I desire also to carry some gifts to Death Fighter, Red Bird his daughter, One Arm Killer and a few other Indians, for I believe, Colonel Merrill, that I can keep the hatchet buried as far as that tribe of Sioux are concerned, and they would be strong allies in

peace or war, as they are dangerous foes now."

"They would be, indeed, and I will also send the two chiefs and the Red Bird some gifts if you deem it wise."

"It would have a splendid effect, I am sure, sir, and I shall be glad to carry what you send, for I shall take extra pack-horses for what I will bestow as gifts."

"All right, we'll make up a fine lot of presents of various kinds that will be useful and ornamental, and load them on pack-animals which will be fine presents for the chiefs."

The matter of presents, and their effects on the Indians, was then talked over for some time, and when all was decided upon, the colonel again said:

"But, Powell, I do not feel that I am doing right to allow you to go alone on this trail."

"Oh, yes, colonel, for I can accomplish so much more alone."

"I do not know how the Indians would take my taking other pale-faces to their village, and should I leave them in hiding, they would doubtless know it and mistrust me."

"No, colonel, I must go alone, and I will let the red-skins know of my intention to hunt down their dreaded foe the Fire Spirit."

"If I am successful, then it will make me a power in their tribe, and give me far greater influence in urging them to give up the war-path and become our allies."

"You argue convincingly, and yet I shall expect you to go to your death and never hope to see you again."

"In fact I shall feel the greatest anxiety for your fate."

"Don't do it, colonel, for I'll pull through all right, never fear," and Surgeon Powell arose and took his leave of the colonel, promising to dine with him that day, and that they should overlook the commissary and quartermaster's departments, and the sutler's together in getting up the gifts for the Indians."

After a rest of a week, in which he had been lionized by all in the fort, Surgeon Powell took his leave of all, bound upon his most deadly mission.

He had his own packs on the two Indian ponies, his two splendid horses, and besides half a dozen fine animals well laden with gifts to tickle the red-skins' fancy and make him solid with his red brothers.

Amid the good wishes of all he rode away, with the string of horses behind him, and soon disappeared, as many believed never to be seen again.

CHAPTER LX.

NOT A SECOND TOO SOON.

The Surgeon Scout had ridden away from the fort in full uniform, to the surprise of many who knew that he had resigned from the army.

But the colonel knew his motive, and explained it to those most interested in knowing.

That he had been among the Indians was known, as well as that he intended to return to their village, after which he would go on a still hunt for the Mad Marauder.

The first day out the Surgeon Scout rode slowly and did not make a long journey of it, for he wished to break his horses in by degrees.

He camped about twenty miles from the fort, and found it no sinecure office to have to unsaddle and stake out his dozen horses.

But he soon had them feeding, and then began to look to his own comfort.

The next day he made some forty miles, and it was on the morning of the fifth day that he passed through the gap where he had so nearly run into the ambush of Mad Dog and his braves.

Finding he would have to enter the village by night if he held on, when the shadows grew longer, he decided to halt for the night, though he was but a few miles from the pass into the valley.

He had staked his horses out, and walked along the ridge on which he had camped, to get a view of the valley he had passed through when with War Eagle and the others on the way to the village.

Why he had picked up his lariat and cur-

ried it along he did not know, but he did so, and held it in his hand as he drew near the cliff and came to a sudden halt.

He knew that the main trail to the village wound just beneath the cliff, and if he saw any red-skins passing along it, he would halt them and continue on into the valley with them, but to go at night was taking too big chances.

But he halted as he neared the cliff like one who had suddenly confronted some great danger.

What he saw was the sun almost upon the horizon of the range beyond the valley, and yet the beauty of the sunset had not brought him to the sudden halt, but the sight of a form he well knew.

That form stood some hundred feet from the edge of the cliff, and as he looked there came to his ears the weird death-song of an Indian about to die.

The wild chant rose higher and higher, the form started forward at first slowly, then more quickly directly for the cliff, and then bounding forward White Beaver whirled his rawhide lariat around his head, launched the coil with true aim and great force and the noose settled down, caught about the slender waist, and back from the brink of death dragged Red Bird, the Little Girl Soldier of the Sioux.

The sudden pull threw her down, and before she could rise, or understood what had checked her mad attempt to leap to her death, the tall form of the Surgeon Scout stood above her.

"The White Beaver!" she fairly shrieked, as she beheld him.

"Yes, and just in time is the White Beaver to save the Red Bird from taking her own life.

"Is this the brave Little Girl Soldier the White Beaver so trusted?

"Would she go out of bright sunshine into blackest gloom?

"Would she die by her own act and have her old father go in sorrow to his grave, the young War Eagle carry a deep wound in his heart, and the White Beaver regret that he ever saw her, that his little sister was glad to get away from him?

"Would she have her people hate the White Beaver for coming among them, and seek to kill him because he had stolen the heart of the Red Bird?

"No, no, the Little Girl Soldier must not make sorrow come to the hearts of her people, must not cause the White Beaver to feel regret that she crossed his trail.

"She must have the same brave heart she had when the Killer's knife was held above her.

"She must have the White Beaver for her brother, and the War Eagle for her lover.

"The White Beaver has spoken, and he feels that the Red Bird will hear his words and heed them.

"He feels that the Red Bird will sing merrily again, for he has brought her many presents, he has come to see her and her people, and she will be happy with the White Beaver's brother, the noble young chief War Eagle.

"Has the Red Bird closed her ears to the words of her brother?"

The girl had stood before him with head bowed, her bosom heaving and as though she felt shame at her act of intended self-destruction.

She listened to all that he said, and realizing that he would be only a brother to her, never a lover, reason came back to her, and she seemed to regret that she had wished to give sorrow to her father, to the War Eagle and her people.

She felt also that she would have deeply wounded the White Beaver by her act.

She looked up into his face now frankly and said:

"The Red Bird has heard.

"The White Beaver has shown her her heart in its wickedness.

"She will be the sister of the White Beaver.

"Come, she will go with him to the village, where he is welcome.

"The Red Bird came here to die, for her heart was sad and there was no sunshine for her.

"But the sunshine has come back now, for she has listened to the words of the White Beaver.

"Come, she will go with him now to her people, and he will not tell them that her heart was wicked."

CHAPTER LXI.

SINGING THE DEATH SONGS.

THE Red Bird had slipped away from her tepee, mounted upon her pretty pony, and had gone to the cliff to leap to her death.

She had kept her sorrow to herself, that she loved the white chief, and allowed the War Eagle to go on believing that she would be his wife.

Upon the morrow, the chief was to claim her as his bride. He had given Death Fighter a large number of horses, he had made presents to Red Bird, and had ready his finest costume, for he was, once more, a well man, his wounds having healed.

A moment later and the Red Bird would have gone over the cliff, but the strange destiny that guided the White Beaver's steps thither, had brought him there in time to save her.

Going back to his camp with him she had aided him saddle his horses, and getting her pony as they went down the hill trail, she rode with him on the way to the village.

She gave the signal call to warn the guards of her identity, and they filed through the canyon into the valley.

In a short while after the white chief rode up to the tepee of War Eagle, while the Red Bird went over to her own lodge to report to her father the return of the White Beaver.

A strange feeling appeared to have come over her, since her rescue from suicide, and she wished to live and show the man she had so fondly loved that she could regard him as her brother, that she would obey his will without regret.

The War Eagle showed his joy at the sight of his pale-face friend by a shout of welcome, and the horse, saddle and bridle with the other gifts brought for him were soon in his possession.

He was as pleased as a boy with new toys, and the articles brought for One Arm and others were laid aside for them.

Then, mounted upon his new horse, with the saddle and bridle on, with his belt of arms buckled about his waist, and his other gifts carried along, War Eagle went over with White Beaver to the lodge of Death Fighter.

Red Bird was there with him, and the two bade them welcome as brothers, the pipe was smoked, and then the gifts were distributed.

The colonel's gifts to the old chief and the War Eagle delighted them greatly, while Red Bird's heart was made glad with the numerous presents she had received, of gay cloth, ribbons, strings of beads, jewelry and other things that were new and beautiful to her, for the ladies of the fort had vied with each other in giving her just what their various ideas were of what a Sioux young lady about to become a bride should have.

The warm blankets, clothing and provisions sent the old chief he prized above all things, and a more delighted trio Frank Powell had never seen than were Death Fighter, War Eagle and Little Girl Soldier that night.

Seeing by the return of the White Beaver that he had kept his word, and not forgotten them, War Eagle said, after they had left the lodge of the old chief to retire for the night:

"My brother will remember that the traitor chief Mad Dog went into ambush to kill him?"

"The White Beaver remembers."

"They were killed by the White Beaver, and the other braves of the band are prisoners in the village, awaiting the word of my brother to put them to death, for they are coward Sioux, and should die."

Doctor Powell started, for he saw that the twelve braves of Mad Dog's band would be, at a word from him, put to death, having been condemned by Indian justice to die.

After a moment he said:

"They were braves who obeyed their wicked chief.

"The White Beaver does not believe that their hearts are bad, and they did not turn their rifles upon him.

"Those who did so are dead.

"Let the War Eagle go with the white

chief to the guard tepee where these braves are prisoners, and as it is for his white brother to say what shall be done with them, he will do so at once."

In silence the War Eagle went with the Surgeon Scout to the large guard tepee, where sentinels were guarding the twelve braves of Mad Dog's band who had plotted against the life of the white chief.

The braves arose from their robes at the call of their chief, and beholding the White Beaver, felt that their time had come to die.

"Let my braves know that the White Beaver is here, and at his word they must die," said War Eagle, sternly.

The firelight fell full in the faces of the braves, as they stood before the man who held their lives in his hands.

He stepped forward, his knife in hand, but they did not flinch.

Approaching the first in line, he severed the bonds from his arms and feet, and said:

"The White Beaver wishes his red brothers to live, and become great warriors.

"They are free to go their way."

The bonds of all were severed, and the warriors stood like men dazed.

Had White Beaver driven the knife into their hearts, they would not have been surprised; but to be set free amazed them, for he did not act from revenge.

War Eagle himself seemed surprised, and the Indian guards looked on with astonishment.

With a grasp of the hand of each brave White Beaver turned away, and as he walked off with War Eagle the latter said:

"My white brother has a good heart.

"My young warriors will never forget him."

The next morning when Frank Powell awoke he found that he had added new fame to his name.

His coming was known to all, and had silenced the doubting Thomases of the village who had said he would never return.

His presents to the chiefs, to the Red Bird and others had been accepted as though each brave, squaw and pappoose had been remembered.

But his act toward the braves whose lives hung at his mercy had won him still warmer regard from all.

That day the War Eagle bore Little Girl Soldier from her father's lodge to his own, and there was the wildest rejoicing in the village over the happy event.

But the next day the sounds of joy changed to wails of woe, when it became known that the White Beaver was to go out alone and capture or kill the dreaded Fire Spirit.

He was urged against going by Death Fighter, War Eagle and Red Bird; but his resolve could not be shaken, and when at last he mounted his horse, and with his two pack-ponies, and Runaway following, rode away on his perilous mission, the braves of the village escorted him as far as the canyon singing with wild refrain his death-song, for they felt that he was going to certain death.

CHAPTER LXII.

TRACKING THE DEADLY HAND.

UNDETERRED by the warnings and entreaties of his brother officers and all at the fort, and the death-songs of the Indians, Doctor Powell rode away from the red-skin village upon the mission that had long been in his mind to undertake.

His two Indian ponies were supplied with all that he would need for a long stay, and to make him comfortable in camp and out of it.

His two riding horses were well rested, as were the ponies, and, as watchful as dogs, were his strong allies in his undertaking.

He went on the trail he had taken when leaving the village before, passed by the grave of Mad Dog and his two braves, and made his first camp just where he had seen the Mad Marauder dash down the valley.

He held a hope that he would see him again.

It was not dark when he reached the camp, and suddenly, to his delight he beheld a fresh trail.

It was the trail of a single horse.

An inspection revealed the fact that the hoofs were large and iron-shod, and the tracks had been made when the animal was at full speed.

They were about a day old, evidently made that morning early.

The tracks led up toward the mountains, in the direction from whence the Mad Marauder had come the night he had seen him before.

"I will take that trail at dawn," muttered the Surgeon Scout, and he retired to his blankets soon after he had had his supper.

He was up in time to get started with the first glimmer of light, and he pushed on along the trail at a fair pace for several hours, when he halted for breakfast.

He had just finished his meal and was about to go on his way, when suddenly there dashed into view over a rise, coming toward him, none other than the Mad Marauder.

He sprung for his rifle which was against a tree, when with a wild yell, as the Mad Marauder beheld him in full uniform he wheeled his white horse and dashed off like the wind.

With a bound the Surgeon Scout had reached the side of Runaway, his fleetest horse, thrown himself across his back and was in chase.

Once over the rise and there was a long stretch of level land and good running.

The white horse was over half a mile away and fairly flying along.

A chase of ten minutes revealed the fact that Runaway, fleet as he was, could not keep near the animal ridden by the Mad Marauder.

Unwilling to punish his horse, and feeling that he had the trail to follow, the Surgeon Scout turned and rode back to his camp, while the Mad Marauder seeing him in pursuit rode on the faster.

"It is strange that a man who is merciless to all others, and knows no fear, flies at sight of a man in uniform," muttered the Surgeon Scout.

Returning to his camp he saddled Rattler, and leaving Runaway and his pack ponies to follow, continued on along the trail, now fresh and plainly visible, for the Mad Marauder had ridden down along his former trail and then back over it, leaving three tracks.

It was nearing night when he came into a very wild part of the mountains, seamed by deep canyons.

It was here that the Indian band had gone after the gold-hunters and had come upon the Fire Spirit, as they called the Mad Marauder.

"This looks about like a haunt for such a creature."

"The three trails all go this way, so I will continue on."

Coming at last to a narrow canyon Frank Powell discovered many tracks, both old and new, leading in and out of it, and that they led in many directions both going to and from it.

His keen eyes also detected that there were other tracks than those of the white horse.

"I am drawing near the lair of the tiger now, so I will hunt for a camping-place and strike out on foot to-morrow, perhaps guard this canyon."

With this he rode to another canyon where grass and water were plentiful, and soon had his horses staked out.

Taking his rifle and extra ammunition he went on foot back to the canyon, carrying along with him a bag of provisions.

Finding a good place he quietly sat down to wait, with all the patience an Indian would show.

Night fell, and as no one appeared, he went back to his horses, changed their grazing-place after watering them, had his supper and taking his roll of blankets, returned to his post.

He spread his bed behind a rock, at the foot of a tree, made his lariat fast, and then lay down to sleep.

He knew that the slightest sound would awaken him, and the Mad Marauder could not pass out of the canyon without coming within reach of his lariat.

Day was just dawning when he was aroused by the clatter of hoofs, and he beheld the Mad Marauder coming toward him.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE DEMON GOLD-HUNTER.

THE Surgeon Scout was upon his feet in an instant, his rifle placed ready at hand,

his lariat coiled to launch upon the Mad Marauder when he came near enough.

The white horse was coming at a rapid gallop, dimly seen in the early dawn, and in the shadow of the tree the Surgeon Scout would not be seen.

Nearer and nearer came the white horse, the Mad Marauder upon his back, without saddle or bridle, and carrying in his right hand his terrible knife which he had so often used against his fellow-beings.

Around and around his head whirled the long lariat of the Surgeon Scout, to be suddenly launched with skill and strength.

The white horse saw the dark coil in the air and swerved, but not quickly enough for his master to avoid the fatal noose, which settled over the broad shoulders.

In fright the white horse wheeled and darted back up the canyon, there was heard a sharp twang as the lariat tightened, and dragged suddenly from his horse, the Mad Marauder fell with a heavy thud upon the ground.

In an instant Frank Powell had leaped over the rock, dashed down into the trail, pistol in hand, and bent over the huge form.

It lay motionless, save for the twitching of the muscles, for the fall had been a stunning one.

Then, too, the eyes of the Surgeon Scout fell upon the long knife of the Mad Marauder, with which, grasped in his hand, he had so fallen as to drive the blade several inches into his right side.

At once Frank Powell turned the man upon his back, withdrew the ugly knife, and with his lariat securely bound his hands and feet.

Then he stanchd the flowing blood from the wounded side and ran back to his camp for his case of instruments and medicines.

When he returned the now disarmed and helpless Marauder was showing signs of returning consciousness, and bathing his face with water from his canteen, the Surgeon Scout saw the large, fierce eyes open and fix themselves full upon his face.

He saw the face grow more pallid, and heard the hoarsely uttered words:

"Who are you?"

"Surgeon Powell of the United States Army."

"Where are your men?"

"I am alone."

"Alone here in my domain?"

"Yes."

"Why are you here?"

"I came to track you down."

"You have done it."

"Yes, so now can afford to be what you never were, merciful."

"You fell upon your knife and drove it into your side."

"God grant the wound be fatal," uttered with fervent feeling.

"Why?"

"It is better to die so than at the end of a rope."

"True, but let me look at your wound."

"No, it is useless, for I feel that there is an internal hemorrhage that will soon ebb my life away."

"Who are you?"

"What matters it to you?"

"I will tell you that you are one of nine gold-hunters who came here after gold."

"Where is my friend Vance Reynolds?"

"Ah! you knew him?"

"He was my best friend."

"He is dead."

"And the others?"

"Are dead."

"How did they die?"

"Probe this wound, as you are a doctor, and tell me if I have any chance to live."

"Not one in a thousand."

"Then I will tell you how they died. It was I who killed your friend Reynolds."

"Ah! and the others?"

"I killed them all."

"My God! you are a human vampire, man."

"I came here with them to search for gold. We covered up our tracks so that we could not be tracked, burned our bridges after us, so to speak, and went to work."

"We had all kinds of plans to frighten the Indians into letting us alone—red and blue fire, rockets and everything else of a wicked nature."

"We struck it rich, very rich, for we found

gold enough to make us all well off, and pooled it together."

"But, I wanted it all. What all had would make me a very rich man, and so I was tempted."

"One by one, I killed them, and then, when the deed was done, I sought to get still more gold."

"I worked and worked, and all whom I saw come this way I tried to kill."

"I determined to make men fear me, so raided the mining-camps and settlements, attacked trains, gold-hunters and red-skins, and spared no one save soldiers, for once I was a soldier myself, but left the service lured by gold."

"I became gold-maddened and blood-maddened, and—well, you know what I have done, and you are the only one that did not fear me."

"You have come here, just as I was thinking I would go away with my fortune, my loved gold, and live in luxury far from these scenes."

"I have some of the horses of our party to carry the gold, and in a few more days I would have been gone."

"But, you have given me my death-wound, and I will be avenged on you, for I will keep my secret; you can never find my gold," and with a wild burst of laughter, the gold-maddened man repeated again:

"No! no! Dying I am avenged, for you shall never have my gold."

Plucky as he was, Frank Powell was horrified at the mad hate and revenge of the dying man.

But, he saw an instant change come over the face, a look of intense suffering, and a groan broke from between the closed teeth.

Quickly Frank Powell unbound the hands; but too late, for he had but done so when he heard the low uttered words:

"Curse you, too late, for I have not the strength now to kill you."

A moment after the Surgeon Scout folded the hands upon the broad breast, for the mad gold-hunter was dead.

CHAPTER LXIV.

BACK IN TRIUMPH.

THE Surgeon Scout stood for a long time gazing down upon the giant form and savage face of the man whom love of gold had made a human fiend.

But he was a philosopher, and at last, with a sigh, threw his blanket over the form and went back to his camp and cooked his breakfast.

"Then he brought his horses up, and taking a pick and shovel from his pack, sought a spot not far away and dug a grave."

Into this the body was placed, it was filled in and heavy stones piled on top as a monument, and to keep off the wolves.

This work done, he mounted his horse, and with the others following, rode on up the canyon in search of the den of the madman.

He readily followed the trails, and several miles up, under the shadow of a lofty cliff, he came to a pretty valley.

There was a rock cabin there, a corral formed of rocks, and staked out and feeding near were half a dozen horses, one a very large black mare, and not far away the fleet white steed of the madman, and which was loose.

The Surgeon Scout staked his own horses out, and getting near the white, threw a lariat over his head.

The animal took it more kindly than he had expected he would, and was soon most obedient to his new master.

He was a splendid beast, and perfect in form, though very large, and the Surgeon Scout felt that he had captured a prize in him and the black mare at least.

The cabin had only a bed of skins in it, a table of logs, a bench, and some cooking utensils, while from all he discovered about him, Frank Powell felt convinced that the madman had lived like a wild beast, eating flesh and fish alone.

Not far from the cabin were the graves of the gold-madman's victims, but nothing else was found of interest to the Surgeon Scout.

In vain he searched for the golden treasure, for it was not to be found.

Camping that night in the valley, he

searched the next day and the next for the madman's gold.

But it was not to be found, and after three days' fruitless search the Surgeon Scout decided to depart from the scene.

He carried the horses of the Mad Marauder with him, riding the splendid white himself, though at first the animal fretted at the bit and the saddle.

Just one week since his leaving the Indian village, White Beaver rode into the valley mounted upon the snow-white horse of the Fire Spirit, and with the other horses following him.

The horses, save the black mare and the white horse, were given to War Eagle, and, after a stay of several days in the village, the Surgeon Scout started upon his return to the fort, having the pledge of the old chief, Death Fighter, and the young leader of the warriors, that they would bury the hatchet with their white foes.

As his expedition had terminated so quickly, the supplies he had brought with him to last him months, except enough to last him to the fort, were given to old Death Fighter, and with the real friendship of his red brothers, White Beaver started for Fort M—to report his success to Colonel Merrill, and spread the good news that the cruel career of the Deadly Hand Demon had ended.

Again also was the Surgeon Scout made the recipient of many presents from his Indian friends, and the ponies were well laden, for gifts were also sent by the chiefs and Red Bird to Colonel Merrill and others who had remembered them.

With no dread this time of there being foes in ambush for him, Frank Powell started upon his trail, and the third day, after easy riding, came in sight of the fort.

He was not long in being recognized by the sentinel, with his two horses and pack-ponies, and the news of his return spreading about the fort it was at once decided that some accident had caused him to come back, or he had given up his mission.

"No, he is not the man to surrender," said the colonel, when he heard of it, and immediately after it was reported to him that the Surgeon Scout had six horses, a large white and black, which as they were behind the others had not at first been seen.

When he drew nearer there was a burst of cheering, for many scouts and soldiers recognized the large white horse of the Mad Marauder, and this told them that the Surgeon Scout had won the game of life or death played with the merciless man-killer of the mountains.

As he rode into the stockade he was received with deafening cheers, which was repeated when, in answer to a question of the officer of the day he answered:

"Yes, I ran him to earth, Captain Northrop. There are his horses."

CHAPTER LXV.

WHITE BEAVER'S DESTINY.

COLONEL MERRILL listened to all that the Surgeon Scout had to tell him of his hunt for the Mad Marauder, and received with pleasure the gifts sent to him.

"You have won your game against what I believed to be certain death, Powell, and you deserve the greatest credit.

"I regret, exceedingly, however, that you could not find the gold that man hid away, for it must be considerable.

"You must try it again some time, getting some of your Indian allies to help you.

"But best of all, you have cemented a peaceful alliance between the Indians and ourselves, and I am sure if I stated the facts to the Secretary of War you would at once be reappointed into the army."

"No, thank you, colonel, my resignation was final, and I drift with the tide.

"I shall go down to Bed Rock City and practice in the mines for awhile, perhaps getting an interest in some claim, and visiting the Indians at certain times to keep them up to their pledges.

"I may camp a week or so at the Mad Marauder's retreat and have another search for that gold; but if I do not find it then I shall give it up, and leave it for some lucky fellow to fall upon when the country is settling up in the future."

"A lucky find it will be; but then you say you will go to Bed Rock City?"

"Yes, sir, there is considerable money in practicing there, and when I have put aside a good sized purse, I will go East and settle somewhere, for I shall follow my destiny, lead where it will, sir, and my fate beckons me in that direction.

"The black mare, colonel, which belonged to the Marauder, I wish you to accept, for she is still a fine animal, but the white I shall keep, and I will have the satisfaction of knowing that I have the fleetest horse I ever rode, and he follows me like a dog, rather liking the change, I think, from his former vicious master."

It was just one week after his return that Surgeon Frank Powell bade farewell to the fort, and with his two pack-ponies, and three horses, Rattler, Runaway and Rover, as he had called the white horse, he started alone upon the trail for Bed Rock City.

There, was however, another companion that he had, a superb Siberian bloodhound and grayhound mixed, given him by Colonel Merrill, and which at once became a comrade with him and his horses.

"No more sleepless nights for me, with you on guard, Sentinel," he said to the dog as they camped their first night out on the trail.

Arriving at Bed Rock the Surgeon Scout was greeted by Paul Paxton, Little Nugget and others with delight, especially as he said he had come there to hang out his shingle as a doctor.

He bought out a miner who had a good cabin centrally located, and an interest in a claim, and at once settled down to work.

When it became known that he had met and slain the dread Mad Marauder, and had his famous white horse with him, the miners were loud in their praise of him, and regarded him with devoted admiration.

Frank Powell kept the story of the friendly alliance with the Indians a secret, as he knew there were men who at once would invade their territory in search of gold; and he also had nothing to say about the unfound treasure of the madman, or the motive which the terrible slayer had in killing those who went near his haunts.

As he had planned, he was not very long in getting a good practice, principally in gunshot and knife wounds, and from accidents the miners met with at work.

Now and then he had an attack of sickness to pull through for some poor fellow, but disease there was not able to claim victims in the ratio that the knife and revolver did.

It was not very long after his arrival that Doctor Powell began to make a discovery.

This was to the effect that the manager of the property for the Widow Beauty—for such the miners had named Little Nugget—had fallen desperately in love with his pretty employer, while on her part she was deeply interested in the handsome young man who devoted himself so thoroughly to her interests.

"I am glad to see this come out so," mused White Beaver.

"The woman is true as steel, refined, educated and will make him a good wife, and she deserves some happiness in her life during her latter years.

"Paul Paxton is a splendid fellow, and his cleverness has discovered what she never would have been able to find out, that her gambler husband held a claim of some pecuniary kind upon half the miners in Bed Rock City.

"He has already secured for her a large fortune, and will get more.

"Then they can leave this hateful place, marry and settle down in a civilized community, as I myself hope to do some day."

Months rolled by and at last the news spread around that the Widow Beauty was to leave Bed Rock City forever.

She had amassed a fortune, through the good management of Paul Paxton, and she was going to find a home elsewhere.

When she had found one, Paul Paxton was to follow, having closed out the claims in Bed Rock, and they were to be married.

A stage line had been established to Bed Rock City a few months before, and the wealth of the pretty widow had all been sent East, and taking a seat on the box one morn-

ing she departed amid the wild farewells of hundreds of admirers.

Several months after Paul Paxton received a letter telling him to come.

She had found a home in Wisconsin, and they would be married upon his arrival.

There was a message in the letter for Frank Powell which read:

"Tell Doctor Powell that a good physician is much needed here in this rapidly growing town, so he must come.

"Tell him that as he deprived me of a husband—the kindest act of his life—and I have no father or brother, I shall expect him to give me away to you.

"Don't let him fail."

When this was read to the Surgeon Scout he said:

"I suppose it is my destiny, Paxton, and it has been my intention to leave this wild life.

"Go with me to my Indian friends on a visit, then to the fort, and upon our return we will start together."

"I will gladly go with you to the Indian village and the fort, if you will accompany me, Powell, so it's a bargain," was the answer.

Several days after the two started upon the trail to the Indian village, then made their visit of a few days at the fort. Colonel Merrill was presented with the famous white horse as a parting present from his valued friend, the Surgeon Scout.

Just three weeks later, in a pretty home in a beautiful and prosperous young city of Western Wisconsin, on the banks of the mighty Father of Rivers, Paul Paxton and Mrs. Ethel Bolton—*nee* Ethel Arden, were married, and it was Frank Powell who gave the bride away.

To-day, still known as White Beaver, the Magic Medicine Chief, he is famed in his profession, distinguished as a public-spirited citizen, occupying offices of high trust, and in his own beautiful residence a hospitable host.

None are more welcome than his old pals of the wilderness, who shared with him the excitement of the trail, the bivouac of the fort riders, and that close communion of peril and privation which makes friendships that only end with life.

Long live the gallant White Beaver!

THE END.

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